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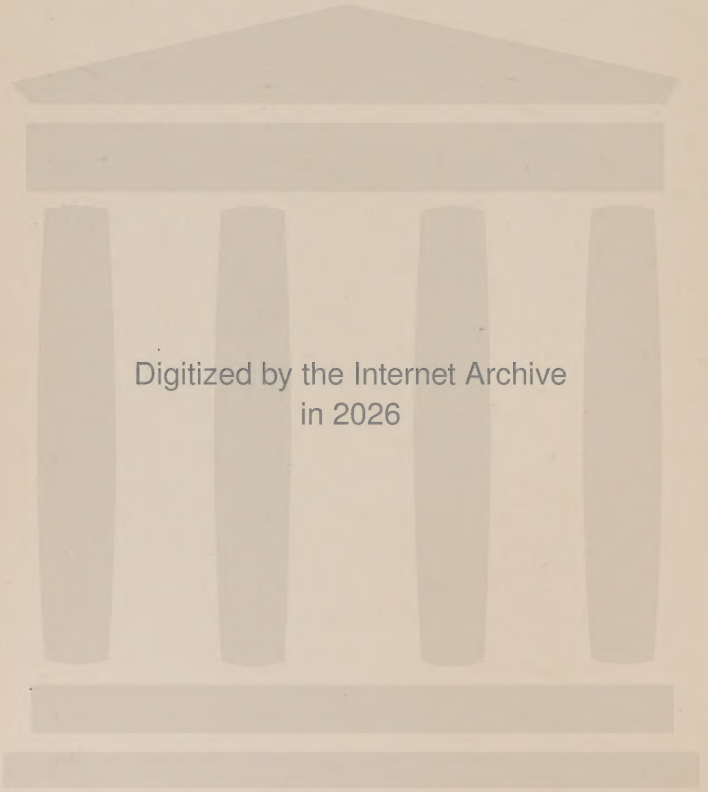

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THE
HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH RATIONALISM

IN THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

WITHDRAWN FROM THE LIBRARIES
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'When the Eleates asked Xenophanes whether they should sacrifice to Leucothea, and mourn for her, or not, he advised them not to sacrifice to her if she was human, and not to mourn for her if she was divine.'—ARISTOTLE.

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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE

In a letter addressed to Archbishop Benson on his acceptance of the Primacy, more than twenty-three years ago, Dr. Fenton Hort mentions as the most formidable perils then in prospect for the English Church, 'the danger of its calm and unobtrusive alienation in thought and spirit from the great silent multitude of Englishmen, and again of alienation from fact and love of fact;—mutual alienations both.'

In my opinion this 'alienation from fact and love of fact' is an evil already afflicting not only the English Church, but all the religious communities in England; and in writing the history of modern English Rationalism I have tried to trace the process by which it has been brought about. For the alienation, as Hort observes, is mutual; and to set fact at odds with faith is to rationalise.

Owing to the singular intellectual decline of England, as distinguished from Scotland and Ireland, during the period immediately preceding the French Revolution, criticism of religious beliefs by English writers in the nineteenth century seems to begin almost *de novo*, like the contemporary revival of literature and science, under the influence of extraneous excitements. Thus the period treated of in this work is marked off from previous periods not merely by our artificial system of chronology, but by what may be called a true scientific frontier in time.

Nevertheless, the roots of modern English rationalism, as of all other historical products, stretch far back into the past; and in order to make it intelligible, I have been obliged

to preface my account of its phases with a few introductory chapters, summarising the results reached by criticism up to the beginning of the last century, with some reference to the sort of apologetics by which they were met. It seemed the more necessary to furnish this information as there is no work known to me in which it can be found. Various contributions to the history of religious opinion, both English and foreign, have proved most helpful, and my obligations have, I trust, been sufficiently acknowledged in the notes; but no one work gave all the facts needed for my purpose; nor did any work I consulted put what seemed to me the right interpretation on the facts it supplied.

From the point of view here adopted, religious belief is identified with theological dogma. In the present state of thought, rationalism means the hostile criticism of such belief; and I have not affected to conceal the direction in which my personal sympathies lie. They are frankly given to the rationalistic side. It is hardly to be expected that any one who is interested in the subject to the extent of writing a good-sized book about it should not have made up his mind as to the rights and wrongs of the controversy; nor can I see what useful purpose would have been served by trying to keep my preferences a secret. Even the most rigidly impartial of political historians does not attempt to create an impression that every battle was drawn, or that every division resulted in a tie. In the history of opinion success is, after all, determined to some extent by force of argument; and that would be a strange interpretation of duty which forbade me to state at their full strength the arguments on what I consider to be the winning side, or to point out the weakness of the arguments they have overcome. Belief is, of course, determined by other causes besides good reasoning; and I have tried in each instance to show what these were, and for how much they counted in the final result. But my business being primarily with rationalism as an application of reason to

religious belief, I had to test the value of belief by its agreement with the ordinary laws of logic rather than by its agreement with prejudice or passion, just as the historian of astronomy or of chemistry would have to do in discussing the claims of astrology or of alchemy on our respect. After all, the only question of real importance must be whether the facts have been correctly reported, with the proviso that in this instance the leading facts are beliefs and the psychological motives by which beliefs have been determined.

At the same time, although myself a rationalist, I wish to guard against the notion that this work is intended as a contribution to the controversial literature of rationalism. It would neither surprise nor annoy me to hear that the religious convictions of no single reader had been changed by its perusal. But I own that it would be disappointing to hear that I had thrown no fresh light on the evolution of opinion as such. And if I am not liable to that charge, if I have made the courses of thought a little more intelligible, then my book ought to interest serious students of history, whatever their opinions may happen to be. However dogmatic their beliefs, I trust that they will not be deterred from reading it merely because they find the opposite view stated with unequivocal decision in its pages.

It will be seen that much space has been given to the exposition of various philosophical systems in their relation to religious belief. But considerable as is the place made, I fear that the exposition of these philosophies has been to some extent hampered by the necessarily narrow limits within which it has had to be confined; and some readers may rather resent the apparent assumption that religious belief depends in any way on the intelligence of speculations which cannot be made clear in a few sentences. Such impatience is natural, and would be justifiable if rationalism were responsible for the complications and difficulties introduced by the appeal to some 'higher reason' against conclusions resting on the logic

of common life, of the law-courts, and of positive science. But in fact this appeal to transcendental considerations is often the last refuge of an authoritative tradition dodging behind the idols of the theatre, when the idols of the market-place and of the cave have been overthrown. Or else it is the refuge of certain cowardly equivocators, who, having for their own part rejected the popular faith, try to keep on good terms with its confessors by accepting its creeds in what they call an esoteric sense, that is to say, in a sense diametrically opposed to the original meaning of their words. And I am bound to add that some of the very greatest philosophers, being by their mental constitution the most comprehensive and conciliatory of mankind, the readiest to see good in evil or truth in error, the born mediators between old and new points of view, are thoroughly sincere in their reconstructive efforts, thoroughly unconscious that their systems have the value and function of wooden pontoons rather than the value and function of iron bridges. Accordingly my object has been to give such an analysis of the systems in question as should suffice to show their merely provisional office, their fatal incoherence under the strain of opposite forces ever tending to pull them to pieces. At the same time, those who find the sections of such ideal engineering too difficult or too tedious to follow, may safely pass over as much of the book as is concerned with pure philosophy, reserving their attention for the more concrete or more personal interests dealt with elsewhere.

I have not attempted to furnish anything like a complete bibliography of modern English rationalistic literature. Only such works are mentioned as may be supposed to have exercised a real influence on religious belief in the negative sense. And during the last twenty years of the century these have multiplied to such an extent that only on very stringent principles of selection could the documentary material be brought within manageable dimensions. Still less can the reader look for a full account of the forces opposed to rationalism, whether under the

form of religious movements or of apologetic literature. To some extent these have been concerned as factors in the evolution of rationalism itself; and whenever this seemed to be the case, I have tried to describe them—from the outside—in sufficient detail. It had been my original purpose to say something from this point of view about the most celebrated recent work written in defence of religious faith against reason, Mr. Arthur Balfour's 'Foundations of Belief.' But I cannot find that Mr. Balfour's book, with all its literary brilliancy and controversial ability, has exercised any perceptible influence on contemporary opinion. Nor indeed is its failure very surprising. For any sort of belief, or of no-belief, might with equal plausibility be built upon such foundations as the late Prime Minister has laid. In principle his method amounts to assuming that, nothing being certain, what agrees with our wishes ought to receive our assent. In practice it means so disposing the lights and colours on the system of belief most endeared to us by early associations as to make it seem the most agreeable of all. Such a method may be good enough for theology, because there it can be applied to the further use of passing off defeats as victories. But if the same method were applied to commercial enterprise, it would soon lead to bankruptcy; applied to party-government, it would break up the strongest political organisation in a few years; applied to international politics, it would sooner or later bring about the industrial or military ruin of any country blind enough to entrust the philosophic doubter with the conduct of its affairs.

As to other omissions and deficiencies, they will, I hope, be criticised with due regard to the circumstance that the present enquiry relates to a subject which has never been treated before as a whole, and the materials for which have been systematically ignored by nearly every historian of modern English life and thought.

15*th February*, 1906.

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The Edinburgh Review.
The Fortnightly Review.
Fraser's Magazine.
Hermes.
The International Journal of Ethics.
Mind.
The National Review (1855–1864).
The Quarterly Review.
The Westminster Review.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES AND A CORRECTION

VOL. I.

For Collins's criticism on Daniel (p. 124), see his 'Scheme of Literal Prophecy,' pp. 148 *sqq.* and 440 *sqq.*

For Bishop Watson's etymology of Jordan (p. 218), see Letter III. of his 'Apology for the Bible,' *sub in.*

For Quesnay's theory of thoroughgoing political absolutism, p. 288, see his 'Despotisme de la Chine,' reprinted in Auguste Oncken's edition of his works ('Oeuvres de Quesnay,' Paris, 1888, pp. 563 *sqq.*).

Keble's Assize Sermon, of which an account is given on pp. 350-351, will be found in his 'Sermons, Academical and Occasional' (Oxford, 1847), pp. 127 *sqq.*

In the section on Sir Charles Lyell I have implied (p. 375) that he suffered no personal annoyance on account of the views expressed in his 'Principles of Geology'; and I do not think there is any mention of an attempt at persecution either in his 'Life and Letters,' or in the article on him in the 'Dictionary of National Biography.' It seems, however, according to Prof. Huxley (Collected Essays, IV., p. 216), that Lyell, in the course of a public address, delivered in 1874, 'spoke, with his wonted clearness and vigour, of the social ostracism which pursued him after the publication of the "Principles of Geology," in 1830, on account of the obvious tendency of that noble work to discredit the Pentateuchal accounts of the Creation and the Deluge.'

It is just possible that Lyell may have been merely referring to the exclusion of ladies from his lectures, mentioned on p. 369.

THE HISTORY
OF
ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I

RATIONALISM AND THE METHODS OF FAITH

If the meaning of words were invariably determined by their etymologies, rationalism might be defined as the method and doctrine of those who strive to make reason the supreme regulator of their beliefs nd of their actions; who try to think and speak in terms to which fixed and intelligible senses are attached; who neither assert anything that to their knowledge is inconsistent with admitted truth, nor shrink from accepting the logical consequences of such truth, however remote or unwelcome they may be; and who similarly desire never to act without a conscious purpose, or with conflicting purposes, or with means that conflict with their foreseen ends.

Rationalism so understood would surely merit universal and unqualified approval. To praise it would be to praise reason itself. The rationalist would then be one who cultivated in a pre-eminent degree the faculty by which men are chiefly distinguished from brutes, and the higher from the lower races of mankind, a faculty the denial of which to any human being is associated with contempt when it is partial and with pity when it is complete. And to write the history of rationalism in any country would be to write the history of the best thing in its civilisation, the surest promise of its happiness in the future.

We know, however, that common usage would not tolerate such an interpretation for a single moment. Rationalism and

rationality are felt to be widely different even by those who would be least able to set out the distinction in clear terms. The opponents of what is called rationalism would be sorry to admit that its adherents had a monopoly of reason; nor, when they are truly reasonable, is such a monopoly claimed by the rationalists themselves. What divides the two parties is in fact not so much a question of principle as a question of interpretation. What is meant by reason, what are the limits of its applicability, how does it apply to the matter under discussion —these are the points most frequently raised in the controversies with which we shall have to deal.

At the very outset common usage requires that a very sweeping restriction should be made. Our first definition embraced practice as well as theory. It exhibited complete rationality, that is conscious and avowed self-consistency, as the ideal of conduct no less than of belief. But those whose highest aim in life is to behave reasonably have never been called rationalists. They neither form a party nor do they incur the hostility of any party, though as individuals they may not be very popular with the passionate, the impulsive, or the sentimental sections of society. As a class they are best known under the name of philosophers, more appropriately perhaps than certain scientific specialists on whom the same title is vulgarly but inaccurately bestowed.

The rationalist, on the other hand, is a pure theorist. His theories may or may not influence his practice; but in either case their significance remains the same. Nor does the restriction stop here. The ideal of speculative rationality already set out is now so thoroughly recognised among the educated classes of the civilised world as binding on nearly all our beliefs that in most instances there is no need to distinguish its votaries from the rest of the community. In physical and moral science, in history, in legal investigations, in legislative debates, in the anticipations of business men, in the rough forecasts of private life, reason has only to contend against the dead weight of ignorance, stupidity, and slothfulness: it is not met by a direct denial of its claims.

There remains, however, one most important class of beliefs in reference to which we do encounter such a systematic denial, or an admission made so grudgingly and qualified so carefully

as to be practically equivalent to a denial. These are religious beliefs, especially as presented under the organised form of theological creeds; and it is by the thorough-going application of reason to these creeds with a view to their partial or complete verification that rationalism begins. A rationalist assimilates religious beliefs to every other kind of belief, and demands that they should be judged by the same rules of criticism. He does not in the least object to dogmatic teaching as such, preferring even that all propositions should be presented in clear-cut, categorical forms; but he requires that the dogmas should be stated in intelligible terms, with meanings consistently adhered to; that they should be true in the sense of corresponding to objective realities, existing outside ourselves; and that they should either be self-evident or logically deducible from self-evident premisses. And if the religion is historical, that is to say if its credentials take the form of events alleged to have occurred at certain epochs in past time, or of writings professing to contain authoritative communications from the object of religious belief, he similarly requires that these narratives and documents should be subjected to the same tests as those applied to what theologians call profane history and literature in respect to their credibility and authority. And he further requires that, admitting their authenticity, the sacred books should be interpreted like any other book.

No mistake would be greater than to assume that the thorough and sincere application of the method here indicated is necessarily fatal to religious belief in every mind, or even in every mind of great power. What its effects may be in the long-run on an entire community is another question—a question on which some light will perhaps be thrown in the following pages. At present we have to note the undoubted fact that there have been religionists of high ability and culture who, after submitting their belief to such an ordeal, have carried it out unscathed and even confirmed. But it is equally a fact that such thinkers are regarded with grave suspicion by the majority of their own religious community; that they seldom accept the popular creed of that community in its entirety; and that their own disciples not seldom push religious negation to its extreme. Hence the rational theologian, while repudiating the name of rationalist for himself, is liable to be taxed

with rationalism by his less adventurous co-religionists. And from this we may gather that our analysis is still incomplete. In short, a result as well as a method is involved in the meaning of the term under consideration, or rather it is assumed that the method can only lead to one result, which is a negation. In still plainer language rationalism is the mental habit of using reason for the destruction of religious belief.[1]

It will be observed that in this definition of rationalism the extent to which the destructive process is carried remains undetermined. In point of fact it varies considerably as between different enquirers, different countries, and different ages, the demands of criticism trenching more or less on the province reserved to faith, while their respective points of view remain as sharply distinguished as ever. To trace these variations and to assign them to their proper causes is the business of the historian, the interest and value of whose work depends on the success with which it is performed.

In defining the issues of a controversy carried on at all times with feelings of bitter animosity among the majority at least of the partisans arrayed on either side one anticipates a certain difficulty in hitting off a formula equally acceptable to both. And in the present instance it seems possible that neither party will feel quite satisfied. Many religious persons will be reluctant to admit that reason, properly so-called, can be destructively applied to their beliefs. And many rationalists may demur to the ascription, in their case, of a purely negative function to reason—that reason without which the vast structure

[1] Some readers would no doubt have been better pleased if I had substituted 'theological dogmas' for 'religious beliefs.' I have chosen the latter term not from any desire to be needlessly offensive, but because it is more generally intelligible. And the very existence of such a distinction as the substitution would imply is disputed by most religious believers. Cardinal Newman tells us that by 'Religion' he means 'the knowledge of God, of His Will, and of our duties towards Him' ('Grammar of Assent,' p. 389). This would not be accepted as a satisfactory definition by a Buddhist or a Positivist. But in fact it will cover all the religious beliefs with which the rationalism whose history I am writing has had to deal. Elsewhere or at other times rationalists might quite conceivably turn their criticism against the religious beliefs of Buddhism or Positivism; but such attacks do not concern us now. And as my subject is so limited I shall on occasion have no scruple in using 'theology' as synonymous with religion, and 'dogma' with religious belief. In fact they are a definite, systematic presentation of what rationalism controverts.

of our positive knowledge would not exist. Both objections may be met by an appeal to that great arbiter of language, the usage of well-educated people in literature and conversation. Outside strictly scientific treatises that definition is best which best exhibits in abstract form what is common to all or most of the particular facts denoted by a word. And in a literary definition like this of rationalism the terms involved must themselves be taken in a somewhat popular and elastic sense. Thus 'reason' must be allowed for the present to bear the meaning ordinarily attached to that word without prejudice to any distinction that may hereafter be proposed between the universal and the individual, or the higher and the lower reason, or between the reason and the understanding. And when we speak about its destructive action on religious belief, 'destructive' must be understood to connote the wish and intention of the rationalist rather than the actual success of his hostile operations.

But should the scruples of the religious believer not yet be appeased, we must beg to remind him that there are a good many religions in the world besides his own, and consequently many religious beliefs that in his opinion, or if that be too mild an expression, to his knowledge, are false. Now, how does he prove that they are false? Why, simply by showing that they are irreconcilable with one another, or with generally acknowledged truth; or, finally, because they conflict with his own creed, which he knows to be true. But in each case he is assuming the first principle of all reasoning, which is that mutually contradictory propositions cannot both be true; in other words, he is making that destructive application of reason to religious belief which appears to be the end and aim of rationalism. At the same time the religious controversialist cannot properly be called, and indeed never is called, a rationalist, simply because his primary object is not to destroy religious belief as such, or to replace it by purely natural knowledge, but to substitute one religious belief for another.

Against such a merely negative use of his name the rationalist may, as I have said, conceivably protest. His mind may be well stored with positive convictions built up by logical processes; and his hostility to religion may proceed not from love of negation as such, but from the jealous hatred

with which those convictions are assailed by religious believers. But such claims, however well founded, cannot be allowed to interfere with the proprieties of language. Custom has ruled that the submission of belief to pure reason shall be called rationality in reference to every branch of natural knowledge, and rationalism only when it leads to the rejection of those supernaturalist beliefs with which religion has become identified. And the distinction is not only customary but highly convenient. It offers one of the few instances of a party-name which can be bestowed without offence and accepted without reluctance. While not implying the necessity of any positive convictions beyond confidence in the validity of pure reason, it leaves room, as we have just seen, for the presence of such convictions to any extent, so only that they harmonise with reason and consciously operate to the exclusion of some or all religious beliefs; indeed, the more of such convictions any one holds, the more of a rationalist he will be. Thus the history of rationalism is no mere chronicle of successive negations; it has to trace the growth of positive ideas in so far as they have come into conflict with religious ideas.

Apart from such considerations, it seems to me, I must confess, that the prejudice against negative criticism, so rife throughout the whole of the nineteenth century and sanctioned by many great names even among the rationalists themselves, is unjust, and even a little childish. If the ascertainment of truth is desirable, then the removal of error must also be desirable as a means towards that end. But if so, the legitimacy of negative criticism is measured only by its success; in this instance, at least, right is coincident with might. Nor is it enough that the work of demolition should have been performed once, to the satisfaction of a few advanced thinkers. A knowledge of the results and methods of criticism must be diffused through all classes of society, and its processes repeated for every new generation, until the old illusions have been definitely replaced by new truths. The work of clearance is slow, and many are apt to imagine that it is complete when it has only just begun. In military language the country supposed to be conquered has been merely overrun; and the invading army which seemed on the eve of occupying the enemy's capital suddenly finds itself surrounded, overpowered, and disarmed.

Such surprises are commonly accounted for by an alleged law of reaction; and there can be no objection to the phrase if only the underlying facts are properly understood. Reactions in the sense of a return to opinions that have been once renounced by a majority of the individuals composing a community are rare, if indeed they ever occur. But the real opinions of the majority are very liable to be overborne and silenced by a small band of daring innovators; especially when the official exponents of the popular creed happen to be associated with the maintenance of unpopular abuses. Remove the abuses, or give the threatened interests time to reorganise their defences, and advocates enough will be found to reassert the old beliefs with a display of argument sufficient to satisfy the logical requirements of the multitude by whom they have never been wholly abandoned. Rationalism, voted out of date by an overwhelming majority, is in its turn silenced and overborne. Literature and science assume a decidedly pietistic tinge; and philosophy addresses itself to the familiar task of harmonising the opposite extremes in the synthesis of a higher unity.

Such was the fate that actually befell rationalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the movement of uninstructed opinion to which it would in any case have temporarily succumbed being enormously strengthened by the accidental association of negative criticism with the destructive fury of the French Revolution. Hence a peculiar odium became attached to the anti-religious aspects of pre-revolutionary philosophy, as if they were responsible for the Terror or for Napoleon's devastating career. Nor was this feeling limited to the reactionary party. A new school of thinkers arose, who, while adopting to the fullest extent the negative results reached by Voltaire and Hume, affected a somewhat depreciatory tone in their references to those great men, and habitually discouraged any return to their methods. But in truth they erred by overestimating rather than by underestimating what Voltaire and Hume had accomplished, at least to the extent of believing that the ground had been effectually cleared for their own theoretical reconstructions, in profound ignorance of the formidable obstacles still presented by popular theology. And much of what seems confused or desultory or inconclusive in the controversies of the last century may be traced to a certain want of lucidity, to an

unwarrantable assumption on the one side that negative criticism is superfluous, on the other side that it is superannuated, and on both that it has been superseded. Rationalism in its old sense has, we are told, been displaced by the historic method, a method to which both sides in the religious controversy appeal with confidence in verification of their claims.

This assertion, however, involves a complete misapprehension of the controversy itself. The issues have been widened rather than transformed. We have already observed that rationalism, though destructive in its aim, is not purely negative in its procedure: rationalists do not limit themselves to pointing out contradictions in the propositions they attack, but they also attempt to show that the pretensions of theology are irreconcilable with certain positive truths. Or, again, when it is claimed that particular facts of experience, or more particularly of religious experience, can only be explained by reference to supernatural agencies, the rationalist maintains that they can be explained as well or better by natural law; as, for instance, the appearance of the human race by evolution from lower animals, alleged miracles by misapprehension or prejudice, the rapid spread of a new faith by political, social, or economic causes, and so forth. Now, a very slight analysis will show that here also the logical weapon of contradiction is employed; only, whereas religious beliefs were represented before as being inconsistent with themselves, the historic method exhibits them in their inconsistency with what we briefly call science, that is to say, with truths established by the most stringent methods, and always accepted by the theologians themselves when they have no religious interests to uphold.

So far, then, from being opposed to rationalism, the historic method is no more than a particular application of the fundamental postulate on which all destructive criticism ultimately rests. As such it is always an interesting and often an effective line of argument. It appeals very strongly to a certain class of minds, those who never willingly surrender one belief until it has been replaced by another, and on whom the belief of others acts like a spell that can only be broken by explaining the circumstances of its origin. But it has the disadvantage of shifting the burden of proof on to the wrong shoulders, of seeming to admit that theological explanations hold the field

until they have been replaced by scientific explanations. As a consequence of this apparent concession, theological controversialists soon learn to take the offensive, and show themselves proficients in the use of sceptical weapons, among which ridicule is not the last to be employed. And when the new theory has been reasoned down, or laughed down, or cried down, it is assumed that no alternative remains but to accept the old theory once more.

If the positive results of scientific reasoning and observation should succeed in holding their own against the negative criticism of religious believers, another system of tactics is brought into play. The new views are no longer disputed; but they are now declared to be perfectly compatible with the old faith, and indeed strongly to confirm it. Such a change of front is, after all, no more than what the rationalist need expect. According to him, religious believers are trained to inconsistency, and have long been accustomed to entertain mutually inconsistent propositions as concurrent expressions of absolute truth. What wonder, then, that they should accept another set of propositions, the incompatibility of which with their creed is probably less flagrant than the incompatibility of that creed with itself? But so much logical modesty survives even among the most credulous that they are not always willing to embrace the incompatibility when presented in naked terms. To suit the requirements of such persons, more or less ingenious reconciliations are manufactured, and enjoy a popularity inversely proportioned to their philosophic value; so that critics who disdained the comparatively easy task of directly applying reason to the destruction of religious error have to undergo the more irksome drudgery of disentangling a web where error and truth are intertwined.

Reference has already been made to a weapon frequently employed by modern rationalism in its controversy with theology, the method of explanation. But the range of this weapon seems often to be misapprehended. To show how a belief came into existence is not necessarily to show that it is false. All beliefs, true and false alike, have been evolved, that is to say, they have been formed by a process of gradual growth, a process in which the earlier stages often differ so widely from

the later that there may seem to be nothing in common between them. There is, however, one class of beliefs that are considerably weakened, if they are not entirely destroyed, by what may be called the evolutionary method. These are the beliefs based on authority, for which no other ground than authority can be given. The general principle of authority as a source of faith is one on which a good deal will have to be said hereafter. In the present connexion no more is meant than the general plea that a proposition must be true because it has always been believed by all mankind, or by a great many people in different places and for a long time past, or by some highly gifted individual with good means of knowing the truth. Now, if it can be shown that the person or persons quoted have been led to entertain the belief in question, not by a candid examination of the evidence, but by some baseless prejudice or by some fallacious course of observation and reasoning—in short, by some process out of relation with the correspondence necessarily existing between a true belief and objective reality—then their authority has been to that extent destroyed, and the belief, if supported by no other evidence, must be abandoned. For instance, if it can be shown that theism was evolved out of the belief in fetiches, or totems, or powerful ancestral ghosts, or some other equally delusive imagination, then theism, whatever other reasons we may have for accepting it, can hardly appeal to the argument from universal consent once so triumphantly urged in its favour. But those other reasons, if any, retain the same value as before.

Again, when it is mentioned that some particular institution or literature or book presents such unique marks of supernatural origin or guidance or protection that we must needs accept its teaching as divine and infallible, the rationalist tries to show that the institution or literature or book for which this august derivation is claimed can be sufficiently accounted for as the product of unaided human faculty. But here also his assault, if successful, affects the authority rather than the substance, the credentials rather than the *credenda* of religion. And it always remains open to the theologian to disprove or deny his explanation, or to trust to the advance of speculation to supersede it—an almost inevitable incident when conjecture is easier than verification, and the theorists are more numerous than the facts.

Once more, to take the latest phase of modern rationalism, there are certain dogmas, such as the Atonement and the Real Presence, that have been habitually screened from the attacks of reason behind a veil of mystery as truths too deep for human intelligence to fathom. Now, this veil the new criticism tears away by tracing back the alleged mystery to the belief of primitive races, in whose case they are universally regarded as evidences of the grossest ignorance and superstition. How theologians in general regard so compromising a genealogy has not as yet appeared. But some of them seem prepared to evade the difficulty by extending the notion of divine revelation so as to embrace totemism and other savage religions which their predecessors would have ascribed to suggestions proceeding from a precisely opposite quarter. Thus modern orthodox apologists are beginning to find an intuition of the supreme verities in what rationalists regard as a peculiarly hideous type of ritual murder followed by a loathsome cannibal feast.[1] And there seems to be no hope of deciding the quarrel until we appeal from the historical method to older and simpler principles of reasoning.

It appears, then, that the explanatory, positive, or evolutionary type of rationalism, although, as I have said, more interesting and more congenial to our modern habits of thought than the analytical, negative, and, so to speak, revolutionary type that we associate with eighteenth-century philosophy, in reality rather supplements than supersedes it. When it has been shown that certain widely spread beliefs are not founded on fact, nothing can be more natural and reasonable than to ask ourselves, on what, then, are they founded? And apart from scientific curiosity there is, as we have seen, a strong controversial motive for undertaking the enquiry. In no other way can the claims of authority be finally dissipated. In no other way can the lingering dissatisfaction of former adherents be finally set at rest. Only the rationalist must take good care to prove that this or that religious belief *is* an illusion before he proceeds to show how the illusion came to be entertained. It would be premature to explain why the earth seems to be stationary if astronomy had not demonstrated that it is moving.

[1] See Mr. W. R. Inge's Essay in 'Contentio Veritatis,' p. 272.

In order to elucidate still further the essential meaning and function of rationalism, it will be useful to review briefly certain terms with which it is apt to be confounded in popular phraseology. In this connexion the first that occurs to me is materialism. I have heard the two spoken of as if they were exactly synonymous and interchangeable denominations. Now, any reader who has given the least attention to the foregoing analysis of rationalism, and who attaches any definite meaning to the word materialism, will see at once how great a misconception is involved in their identification. The materialist holds a particular theory about the nature of things. He believes that the universe consists of what we call matter, that is a substance without cause, without purpose, originally without consciousness, and subject only to the mechanical laws of attraction and repulsion, impact and pressure. Our consciousness, according to him, has been derived from this substance, but has no influence on its movements, and perishes with the dissolution of our bodies. A rationalist may hold this or any other theory of the universe that seems to him consistent with reason, or he may abstain from such speculations altogether; his method only commits him to the belief that there is an absolute all-embracing reality existing independently of our individual consciousness, the events of which occur according to a fixed order entirely consistent with itself, and quite unaffected by our thoughts and wishes, except in so far as they enter into it as determining antecedents. At the present moment all materialists are probably rationalists, that is, they have been brought up in religious beliefs to the destruction of which their reason has subsequently been applied. But one might easily conceive a state of society in which materialism should be authoritatively taught, and accepted with no more exercise of reason than is now involved in repeating any religious creed or catechism by rote. The pupils in such a school would be materialists without being rationalists. And certainly there are many rationalists of various shades who repudiate and make war on materialism as involving contradictions no less flagrant than those contained in any theological scheme.

Rationalism coincides much more nearly with what is called freethought, but is less purely negative in its implications. A freethinker would presumably admit that he was bound by the

laws of logic; but his name has not the advantage of acknowledging that intellectual duty. It was no doubt originally coined as a protest against the imposition of religious beliefs by authority—a protest equally, though less directly, conveyed by the word rationalism. But authority, as will presently appear, is only one motive in that very complex and variable frame of mind by which religious belief is guarded against the destructive application of reason.

Scepticism was formerly used as a rather polite word for the more or less complete rejection of religious belief, but is now with great advantage being restored to its ancient signification of doubt and suspension of judgment as distinguished from complete denial, and of doubt not limited to any particular department of belief. So understood, scepticism is in high favour with theological apologists; and in the course of this enquiry it will appear to be rather an enemy than a friend of true rationalism.

Agnosticism, like scepticism, is good Greek, and, though never used by the Greeks, might well have obtained currency among their philosophers, had one of them ever thought of coining it. Singularly enough, we do not owe this very expressive term to a Hellenist, but to a distinguished physiologist, who did his best to spoil his own creation, though fortunately without success, neither he nor any one else having ever employed it in the sense of his own definition. Professor Huxley, when he publicly assumed the title of an agnostic, declared its essential principle to be 'that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty.'[1] Surely agnosticism by usage and etymology alike is concerned not with moral restrictions on the profession of belief, but with intellectual restrictions on human knowledge. One so well read in the history of philosophy as Huxley might have remembered that various thinkers have propounded systems of the universe containing propositions which they, honestly no doubt, held to be 'logically justified by the evidence,' but which any agnostic would at once rule out as asserting what lies beyond the power of reason to ascertain. To mention only two names, Spinoza and Hegel might have

[1] 'Science and Christian Tradition,' p. 310.

accepted every word of Huxley's definition; yet no critic with any regard to the proprieties of language would call either of them an agnostic. For agnosticism most assuredly implies that there are unknowables, and that the ultimate constitution of reality is among the number. Now, Spinoza's system was the very type of those speculations whose hopelessness Hume and Kant, Huxley's most revered masters, tried to demonstrate; while Hegel was the most conspicuous figure in the reaction against their attempt to restrict the limits of what can be known. Huxley's definition covers rationalism in the wide sense, but altogether omits the differentiating note of agnosticism, as indicated by the etymology of the word, and as universally understood by educated persons, which is that of a power behind phenomena we know and can know nothing except at most the bare fact of its existence.

Now, it may be said of rationalism in the narrower sense here affixed to it that it is ignorant of such ignorance. It is no more responsible for the agnostic's limitation of knowledge to phenomena than for the materialist's limitation of reality to mass and motion. In truth the agnostic begins where the rationalist leaves off. Having convinced himself that the course of nature has never been interrupted by a divine revelation, and that the arguments for natural theism are not less futile than those for the truth of any particular religion, he examines the alternative explanations of the universe and finds them equally unsatisfactory. Finally, he asks for an explanation of the fact that there is no explanation forthcoming, and finds it, as he thinks, in the very nature of knowledge, in its essential relativity. Throughout the appeal is to reason, and to reason alone. But reason in the hands of the agnostic is applied to the destruction of non-religious metaphysics rather than to the destruction of religious belief.

Of those who in England accept the extreme results of rationalism, the immense majority call themselves, and are called by others, agnostics. Few among them perhaps could define their position with strict logical accuracy, but all are probably aware that it could be expressed with sufficient clearness by saying to the theologians, 'Because I reject your self-contradictory explanation of things, I am not therefore bound to replace it by one of my own. After all, I am only

following your own example. You accept the existence of a personal creator as an ultimate fact that we cannot go behind. I stop at the existence of the universe, which at any rate has the advantage that you and I are both agreed in admitting it, and in my opinion the further advantage that I am not obliged to credit it with inconsistent attributes.'

Such an attitude is exceedingly irritating to orthodox controversialists, some of whom not many years since betrayed their feelings by the rather unworthy device of proposing to use the old word 'infidel' instead of 'agnostic.' Their attempt provoked a controversy which soon ran off on totally irrelevant issues, the original question being tacitly decided in favour of the new name. It may be surmised that motives of social urbanity rather than of logical propriety determined the result. Infidelity is associated not only with the theoretical substitution of reason for faith, but also and still more with the criminal breach of engagements, conjugal and pecuniary, for which agnostics profess no less respect than religious believers, and which believers, in proportion to their numbers, violate perhaps not less frequently than agnostics. There is indeed much the same objection to calling agnostics or any other class of rationalists infidels that there would be to calling their opponents gnostics or irrationalists. Such appellations are not only offensive, but misleading; and we can never be sure that their object is not to insinuate an odious charge under cover of a cowardly equivocation. And, apart from moral considerations, a theologian who is not absolutely blinded by fanaticism must see that, as agnosticism stands not for religious disbelief in general, but for a particular shade of unbelief, that shade had better, for the sake of controversial convenience, be distinguished by a particular name. Deists, pantheists, and atheists agree with agnostics in rejecting the idea of a supernatural revelation, but differ from them and agree with Christian believers in claiming for the human intelligence a knowledge of things in themselves. And it was just to connote the abnegation of all such knowledge, whether professedly derived from reasoning or from revelation, that the term agnostic, whatever may have been the intention of its original author, was taken up and widely adopted.

Still, however censurable it may be, this attempted revival

of an obnoxious epithet, in connexion with the present enquiry it will be found to suggest an important line of thought. Infidelity implies the absence of faith where faith is expected, just as rationalism, when used in a disparaging sense, implies the illegitimate extension of reason to a region where truth cannot be ascertained—or at least not completely and satisfactorily ascertained—by the methods successfully practised in the acquisition of ordinary knowledge. In other words, religion has a logic of its own distinct from and even opposed to the ordinary logic; and the most general name for this logic is Faith. But faith, as I have already observed, is a complex and variable notion; and we must decompose it into its constituent principles if we would understand the forces against which rationalism has to contend. Authority has already been mentioned as one of these. Under the form of a principle consciously entertained it is the oldest, the most widely diffused, and perhaps even now in the most advanced communities the most potent of all. With this principle, therefore, we may fitly begin, premising only that for the sake of uniformity it will sometimes be referred to under the name of Traditionalism.

People generally believe what they are told; and, whatever cynics may say to the contrary, they are on the whole justified in this assurance. What our habitual associates say to us is almost always meant for the truth, and for all practical purposes almost always *is* the truth. Without such customary veracity, indeed, nothing would be gained by telling lies, just as thieves could not live if honesty were not the rule. But the habit of accepting what is said as truth, although confirmed by the experiences of adult life, originates in the much more deep-seated experiences of youth, and is guaranteed by the survival of the fittest. All properly educated children are brought up, and are rightly brought up, on the principle of unquestioning submission to authority, not only as regards actions, but also as regards opinions, and with the assurance that their teachers are well-informed and sincere. The doubter and reasoner of the nursery or the schoolroom, unless speedily cured of his vicious habit, is little likely to increase the sum of knowledge in his riper years; nor is he much less disqualified for fruitful enquiry if the insincerity and hypocrisy of his elders rather

than any innate scepticism are responsible for his questioning attitude.

Nor is it only the dictates of their parents and other teachers that the young must take on trust. *Pari passu* with the education of the schoolroom there goes on the still more efficacious education of the playground, the training of children by children in habits of deference to anonymous public opinion and blind acceptance of traditional standards. Even disobedience to law has its own laws, full of minute and exacting prescriptions, with which individual choice is not permitted to tamper. It may, indeed, be objected that obedience and belief are not the same thing; and this is true so far as the advanced stages of mental development are concerned. But it is equally true that in the earlier stages they are almost indistinguishable, and that a training in either is a training in both.

In after life a little, but only a little, more latitude of judgment is permitted. It seldom goes beyond the liberty of choosing what authority one is to follow. And here the first faint dawn of reasoned criticism may be discerned. For to assume that when two authorities disagree both cannot be right is to admit the first principle of all reasoning, the self-consistency of truth. And in canvassing the respective claims of two or more conflicting authorities, reason has another chance of being heard; although here also the decision frequently falls to some other authority, not perhaps recognised as such, but none the less independent of, or even opposed to, reason; as, for instance, when the Church of England is recommended to our allegiance on the ground that she follows a middle course, and that the middle course must be right—a purely arbitrary assumption, no more true than that one or other of the opposite extremes must be right. But more often, perhaps, the determining influence is directly personal, and avowedly adopted for its personal value; as when the conversion of John Henry Newman to Roman Catholicism was immediately followed by that of hundreds who had been waiting for a lead from their revered spiritual guide. And Newman himself had been brought, after long hesitation, to the final step of secession by a passage in which St. Augustine appeals with confidence to the united judgment of the whole world. Yet the slightest reflexion would have told him that the Catholic Church of St. Augustine's

time was but a small fraction of the earth's population, and was controlled by a small minority of its own members. Nor if the most complete unanimity of dogmatic belief had then or at any other time been attained, would the world's judgment have been secured against an appeal to posterity.

If the principle of authority retains so much energy even among ourselves, and in minds familiar with the most arduous exercises of reason, what must have been its control over those relatively primitive communities whose beliefs are organised into a customary code and hallowed by an immemorial tradition? Now, it is from such communities that the elements of all religious belief have been handed down, and with the belief the habit of unreasoning acceptance, which is the primary form of faith.

So far the attitude of deference to authority has been referred to as if it were a simple and uniform state of mind. But in point of fact it is a rather complex condition, involving three distinct elements that may be blended in varying proportions. There is, first, the belief that our informant is, to the best of his knowledge, telling the truth; then the belief that this 'best' is real knowledge; and finally, if it is a practical question, the impulse to do as he tells us, in the conviction that what he tells us is right. In three words, we trust, we learn, and we obey. It seems probable that, historically speaking, the element here put, as logically it must be put, last came first, and that trust and learning were evolved out of obedience. Nevertheless, for our purposes the order adopted will be found most convenient.

In ordinary social intercourse, in business transactions, in the law-courts, in politics, in the organised pursuit of knowledge, these three kinds of confidence are sharply distinguished by all who have learned to think accurately; as, indeed, they could not be confused without imminent danger to our lives and fortunes. It is one thing to believe in the sincerity of our friends, and quite another thing to accept their opinions; it is possible, and with the most careful minds quite habitual, to accept as truthful their evidence about what they have heard or even seen without admitting that the real facts correspond to the story constructed out of the memory of their personal impressions. Again, although we are more ready to do what

we are told when convinced that the command is right and based on correct information, we do not think that the relation can be reversed at will, and that to behave as if we believed our informant to be right can legitimately convince us against the evidence, or without evidence, that he is right. Nor, even if he should happen to be right, do we forthwith adopt all his speculative opinions on the nature of things without examination: we do not even feel bound to adopt as valid his reasons —if he gives any—for the course of action enjoined. Still less do we admit a claim to superior authority on the ground that if it should happen to be justified our disobedience would be an act of criminal folly.

Far different is the logic of those religious believers for whom faith is identified with submission to authority. Among them all these distinctions so laboriously drawn by advancing reason are, at first unconsciously, but afterwards deliberately, wiped out. To disagree with the metaphysics of religious teachers is to impeach their character as eye-witnesses; to cross-examine their marvellous narratives is to call them liars; to disallow their pretensions is to reject the whole moral law, including even that part of it which they ignored; to obey the moral law is implicitly to admit that they are right. And even to follow their ritualistic prescriptions is to discover so many new arguments in favour of their creeds; while to cultivate the tender emotions is to give those arguments irresistible force. In short, by their own admission, or rather contention, belief is not a state of the intellect but of the affections and the will.

Recent theological apologists have appealed to modern psychology on behalf of this theory of belief, and, on a superficial view, not without some plausibility. Undoubtedly emotion influences belief by excluding some representations from the field of attention, and by giving more prominence and permanence to others. It also appears that the final assent is in the fullest sense an act, a determination of the will, just like any voluntary movement of the limbs. But it would be an error to assume that this act of assent is either arbitrary, or that it can with advantage be determined by certain interested motives. Without at present going into the general question of freewill, it may be safely affirmed that the 'will

to believe,' at any rate, is not free but determined by the balance of evidence, which will of course vary according to the mental constitution and equipment of the particular person to whom the evidence is presented. And even admitting the most unbounded latitude of choice that any one can claim in giving or withholding his assent to theoretical propositions, it will at least be granted that belief, like other kinds of action, has a standard to which the believer ought to conform. We have not far to seek for that standard; it is already familiar to us under the name of truth—the agreement of our thoughts with the absolute reality of things. In this sense logic has well been called the ethics of belief; and in framing our beliefs it is just as much a duty to discount the refracting influence of emotion as it is to guard against the disturbing influence of passion in forming resolutions of a more directly personal interest.

It would seem, then, that an analysis of belief in general fails to justify the exceptional position claimed for religious faith, and leaves no more room for authority in matters of supernatural than in matters of natural knowledge. But were the case otherwise, were that total inversion and confusion of the relations, elsewhere recognised as legitimate, between intelligence, emotion, and action, which has been preached in aid of religious belief, to be tolerated, no particular religion would find its logical position thereby improved; nor indeed would religion in general be better off as against irreligion. For authority, like the Ares of Homer, is a fickle divinity, equally ready to fight on either side. There is no form of belief or of unbelief on whose behalf the emotions, and through them the will, cannot be engaged. Christianity on its first introduction into the world had to make way against the established laws of the state with an immemorial tradition at their back; it is still confronted in the East by faiths of more venerable antiquity, and in one instance numbering more millions of adherents than itself; while in the West it has to struggle with an increasing body of dissentients who claim to speak with the voice of future and more enlightened generations. Such comparisons merely breed a desire to try conclusions by a more summary method than a census of living or dead or still unborn adherents. Argument is replaced by

invective, and invective leads to violence, taking the form either of street-riots or of a trial of strength in the polling-booths, the legislature, and the law-courts. Thus the substitution of authority for reason leads to that very anarchy which it was the boast of authority to prevent.

In the early stages of social as well as of individual evolution authority is obeyed unquestioningly because unconsciously, without any examination of its credentials, and without any limitation of its claims. But sooner or later, as we have seen, a time comes when authoritative dicta are found to be at variance with one another or with the lessons of accumulated experience. This conflict is decided in the first instance by an appeal to some higher or nearer authority. But, besides the fact that such appeals cannot be carried on for ever, the very sense of inconsistency opens the door to reason as the final arbitrator of belief. Indeed, the conscious recognition of authority as a guide to certainty originates, and can only originate, with reason, which is the sole creator of general ideas. And so, reasonably enough, it was a philosopher, indeed the greatest of all philosophers, Plato, the first self-conscious representative and champion of reason as against the general verdict of public opinion, who ended by invoking the universal and immemorial religious tradition of mankind as against the argumentative irreligion of his contemporaries. It is, he says, impossible to hear the existence of the gods denied with any patience. How scandalous that men should be found to disbelieve in beings whose existence was assumed as unquestionable by their mothers and nurses, and to whom as children they must often have seen sacrifices offered and prayers addressed, more particularly the sun and moon, who are well known to be devoutly worshipped by all mankind, without distinction of race or civilisation! When people are so foolish and wicked as to disregard such evidence, it would be a waste of words to dispute with them.[1] No more unfortunate test-case could well have been chosen, and no more emphatic warning against traditionalism could have been supplied. Not many centuries were to elapse before the whole power of the state was employed to suppress the last remains of this

[1] 'Laws,' 887–8.

traditional sun-worship in the name of a still older tradition, on whose behalf Plato's own authority was frequently and with justice invoked.

Still more complete, and far swifter in the tragic irony of its dialectical retribution, was the fate that overtook the last philosophic advocate of universal suffrage in religion, as Plato had been its first—one who, though not to be compared with Plato as a thinker or a writer, still ranks high among the literary glories of modern France. I refer to the celebrated Lamennais, at once the most eloquent exponent of the great Catholic reaction which followed the French Revolution, and of the return from that reaction to another era of free enquiry. Nourished on the writings of Rousseau, this wayward genius, after a long struggle with religious scepticism, takes priest's orders in middle life, publishes a work basing Rome's claim to infallibility on the consentient authority of the whole human race, combats the liberal politicians in the name of a more radically popular principle, visits Rome to win papal support for a wild scheme of theocratic social democracy, and, failing utterly, sacrifices the remoter authority of the Church to the more immediate authority of the people, flings off his cassock, discards supernatural Christianity, and dies without accepting the ministrations of religion.

Thus the principle of authority, when its supporters make a last rally on the ground of antiquity and universality—*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*—hardly deserves a set refutation, and may safely be left, so far as logic goes, to what philosophers call the immanent dialectic and spontaneous decomposition of every false principle when worked out to its furthest consequences. But in reference to what more nearly concerns us here, namely the psychology of unreasoned religious belief, I may observe that the note of long tradition strikes a more readily responsive chord in the logically untrained mind than the note of world-wide diffusion, which is always a sustaining rather than an originating force. Granting what has already been insisted on, a primitive instinct of obedience, a tendency to believe what we are told and to do as we are told, there is an opposing tendency—whether primitive or not matters little—to revolt against every assumption of authority over us and jealously to question its claims. Now, there can be no surer means of neutralising this rebellious impulse, at

least with the mass of mankind, than for our informant to represent himself as conveying the intelligence or the commands with which he is charged from another informant who similarly seems to be a mere channel of communication from some remoter source. For the mental representation of this process, besides annulling jealousy, calls out the powerful instinct of imitation, prompting a mental repetition of the message received to some imaginary auditor, than which there can be no more potent means of converting an impression into a conviction—if indeed the will to repeat be not itself the intellectual act which constitutes belief. Thus by a process like that concerned in the maintenance of family life, which in passion also it resembles, individual belief becomes a link in the tradition binding an illimitable future to an immemorial past. Any statement, true or false, handed down by authoritative tradition becomes in this way a matter of faith; and very much of human knowledge or error with regard to what goes on in the world of observation has at various times taken on this character of passionate unreasoned conviction. But such traditions can never be quite free from the disturbing influence of individual experience in the way of verification or correction, so that with them the force of pure suggestion can never operate undisturbed; while religious tradition, in so far as it relates to the unseen, suffers only from the disturbances of mysticism, a force which must be reserved for separate treatment.

Still more important than this comparative immunity from the intrusions of contradictory experience is the peculiar affinity of religious belief to the form of authoritative tradition, an affinity that makes tradition the best means for bringing it home to ordinary minds. Whatever view may be taken of the origin of religion, this much, I presume, will be admitted, that in the more developed forms of theology the unseen objects of adoration are conceived as related to their worshippers and to one another in ways suggested by the various forms of human association, above all by the family, the school, and the state. Now, these associations themselves supply the mechanism through which religious instruction is conveyed, and therefore such instruction is, so to speak, an object-lesson in the conceptions that the religious teacher has for his office to impart. For past and future are linked together in the state by power, in the

school by wisdom, in the family by love. And in the most highly developed form of theology it is just these three qualities of power, wisdom, and love idealised and personified that figure as the essential characteristics of divinity, nay, as the very substance of which divinity is made. But through these also, as embodied in those earthly institutions of which I have spoken, is religious belief transmitted and maintained. Close parallelism passes into complete identity; creeds become their own verification; and so in the most highly developed of all religions faith has been exalted to the highest degree of convinced and self-evidencing assent.

Nevertheless, here also the nemesis of violated reason is not far off, and the hollowness of such self-realising convictions quickly makes itself felt. Religion, to maintain itself against or side by side with the truths of experience, must hold fast to an objective existence not ourselves, which we did not create, but which created us, and which is totally independent of our opinions about it. Such are the realities with which science deals; and any attempt to distinguish in this respect between religion and science can only end in opposing them to one another as fiction is opposed to fact. No rationalist ever said more than that religious belief was a subjective illusion; and to dwell on the self-verifying power of faith comes perilously near to an admission that the rationalist is right.

Human nature is not so constituted that the dialectical dissolution of what is false leads necessarily and immediately to the recognition of what is true. After exhausting the resources of authority, faith has recourse to mysticism rather than to reason; and in the foregoing analysis we found ourselves at a point where the boundary seemed to be reached, if not overstepped. But before proceeding to an account of mysticism as an element of religious belief, it seems desirable to pause and reconsider the general relations between reason and authority in the light of certain objections that may be raised against the positions assumed in the foregoing discussion.

To begin with, opponents of rationalism may urge that these two great sources of belief are not necessarily at variance with one another. What has at first been taken on trust is afterwards, in many cases, seen to be demonstrable truth. What has once for all been demonstrated to the satisfaction of competent judges

is afterwards, in most cases, accepted on their word by those who have neither the ability nor the leisure to follow long chains of inference to their logical conclusion, to test the observations from which they start, or to repeat the experiments by which they are confirmed. In this way the mass of mankind accept the established results of physical science without criticism and with no more verification than is furnished by their successful application to the purposes of common life. And there are besides an enormous number of facts which we all of us, the learned as well as the unlearned—indeed the learned much more than the unlearned —are compelled to take on trust, the facts of history in particular. For these we have at best the authority of eye-witnesses beyond the reach of cross-examination, and in most cases merely the tradition, more or less diluted, of what an eye-witness is supposed to have said. Yet here also reason and authority go hand in hand, for it is reasonable to accept such evidence when by the nature of things no other can be obtained. Why should religious belief be subjected to more stringent tests than any other belief?

To such a plea the reply of rationalism, if I am not much mistaken, runs somewhat as follows: The authority of experts on matters of opinion, as distinguished from matters of observation, is only taken subject to certain conditions, not one of which your so-called authorities fulfil. Experience must show that in a number of cases sufficient to constitute a valid induction statements made by experts have on examination proved true. The experts must be unanimous, or, if there be a dissentient minority, very strong reasons must be given for distrusting their opinion. Finally, so far from denouncing criticism, they must welcome it, and must offer every opportunity for verifying their statements, making no secret of the much higher esteem in which they hold those whose agreement with them is inferential than those with whom it is deferential. The difference between such authority and what passes under the name among theologians is the difference between a convertible and an inconvertible paper currency. The one passes readily from hand to hand because it can be exchanged at any moment for the cash that it represents. The other can be kept in circulation only by making the refusal to accept it an offence. As to authority in matters of history, the same rules apply to some extent. Here also experience must show that eye-witnesses do

on the whole faithfully report what they have seen, and that they see what actually happens. The witnesses, if there are several, must agree, or their disagreement must be explained, as also must be the silence of those, if any, who would naturally have reported the alleged occurrence had it come within their cognisance. But this is a point on which rationalists need neither enlarge nor refine. The canons of modern criticism as applied to Greek and Roman history offer a type of the method which, according to them, should be applied to all history; and to demand that the history of any particular people or period should be exempt from such criticism because it embodies a religious tradition is to place the principle of authority in opposition to the principle of reason.

On the other hand, it will be urged by many that their religious belief is either independent of authority or depends on it only to such an extent as reason approves. For the most general facts of what they call their religious experience they appeal to the testimony of consciousness; for the historical facts by which that experience is confirmed, extended, and systematised they appeal to the evidence of unimpeachable witnesses, preserved in well authenticated records. Such a position has unquestionably a great deal in common with the rationalistic position, and runs considerable risk of being denounced as rationalism by the strict traditionalists. Much controversy has been conducted on that common ground during the last century, and will have to occupy us hereafter. For the present two observations will suffice. In the first place, the reasonableness and moderation of certain modern apologists does not alter the fact that authority has been, and still is, invoked by great numbers of religious people as a principle before which reason is bound to give way. And in the second place, a rationalist carries away from his studies of apologetic literature a very strong impression that the new orthodoxy rests on authority just as much as the old; the real basis of belief being concealed from view by a very flimsy superstructure of argument. For, in his opinion, the alleged proofs are such as would not pass muster in any logical review, were not the strongest religious prejudices interested in their admission. As regards the testimony of consciousness, it certainly does carry us outside the domain of tradition, but

without necessarily carrying us into the domain of reason. In truth this alleged evidence of an unseen reality comes under another principle of religious belief, generally known as mysticism, to which reference has been already made, and to the analysis of which our attention must now be directed.

A tradition can have no higher claim on our belief than what belongs to the authority whence it is ultimately derived; and this authority, being enfeebled by every repetition, is weaker than the weakest link in the chain of transmission. This decreasing force of evidence is, however, logical rather than psychological, and is felt by reason only, not by faith. Faith indeed is, as we have seen, rather strengthened than weakened by dependence on an immemorial tradition, a tradition not referable to any specific origin, of which, in the words of Antigone,[1] no one knows whence it came. Even when certain beliefs are traced back to a direct revelation from heaven, that is rather a picturesque way of expressing their supreme sanctity than a real argument for their acceptance, as is shown by the significant fact that belief in the revelation soon becomes no less imperative than belief in the doctrine revealed. But the case is altered when a change of faith has to be justified, or when existing faiths have to be defended against the incipient assaults of reason. Confronted by Creon's doctrine of state-sovereignty in matters of religion, Antigone has to justify herself, not only by an appeal to immemorial custom, but also by an appeal to Zeus and the goddess of Right.[1] In such circumstances the doctrine of revelation becomes a pressing and practical interest; distinctions are drawn between true and false prophecies, between the mere prophet and the specially accredited envoy of God; old-established authorities have to measure themselves against the claims of individual inspiration. And it is through these claims, through the pretension to hold direct intercourse with the supernatural objects of belief, that mysticism comes into view.

The personal element is of great importance. The idea of supernatural communication is indeed no new thing. All religions possess, at least before they fall into decay, a machinery for ascertaining the will of their objects. In general it is a

[1] Sophocles, 'Antigone,' 450 *sqq.*

machinery constructed on a fixed pattern, working by known laws, and placed under the control of experts. The mystic ignores or despises all such restrictions, often denouncing those who work under them as cowardly time-servers or self-interested hypocrites who conceal or pervert the message that he is charged to interpret anew. For while functioning as the chief organ of religious innovation, he does not, as a rule, consciously or intentionally innovate. His professed aim is rather to sweep away modern innovations, to restore belief and practice to their original purity. Nor is this profession always mistaken. There are conservative mystics as there are liberal mystics; the prevailing bias being determined for each individual at any moment by the balance of forces contending for the mastery within. Thus the mystic soul often becomes—and in our own time more often than ever—a battle-field where the causes of authority and reason are fought out. But whichever way the balance inclines, mystics continue to hold in common their one essential principle that true belief is an inward illumination caught straight from the central heart of things; and to that principle both authority and reason seem at first sight equally and irreconcilably opposed.

For however widely their standards of evidence may differ, authority and reason have this much in common, that they are methods of agreement and, so to speak, intellectually altruistic. Authority is nothing unless it imposes a fixed canon of belief on a whole community; nor can its representatives be satisfied until this community is made co-extensive with mankind. And reason also, though rooted in individual conviction, is originally a child of social intercourse, distrustful of its own conclusions until they commend themselves to another mind, and restless until they have been accepted by the totality of reasonable beings, that is to say, by the whole human race. But the visions of the mystic and the convincing power that goes with vision are even more shut up within his own consciousness than the proverbially incommunicable experiences of pleasure and pain. For pleasure and pain, being produced under natural conditions nearly the same for all men, can be understood and sympathised with to a considerable extent by sensitive and intelligent witnesses of their manifestations, whereas those who have never held direct intercourse with the supernatural world

cannot, as would seem, construct an imaginative representation of such intercourse, nor verify the statements of those who profess to have enjoyed it.

Nevertheless, mysticism has overcome this apparently insurmountable difficulty to the extent of having made itself a force of the highest importance in the constitution and propagation of religious belief. I may add that the very difficulty has been the great means of success. The assertion may seem paradoxical. But where all is paradoxical a paradox more or less matters little. What suggests itself as a key to the mystery is this—the genuine mystic habitually speaks and thinks about himself as chosen, without merit of his own, and without reference to the place or date of his earthly existence, by some inexplicable caprice of divinity, to be a channel for the communication of eternal truth.[1] And this consciousness of utter insignificance is not without a significance of its own. For how could the ultimate equality, or rather the utter indifference of all finite existence in presence of the infinite be better illustrated than by so disdainfully casual a choice? Nor again must the mystic's humility, his sense of weakness and dependence, be interpreted after the pattern of earthly distinctions. For self-abasement in the ordinary sense would imply a surviving consciousness of self as something separate and limited; and such consciousness is either annihilated by that sense of absorption in and identification with the infinite which for many mystics is the goal of aspiration, or it comes back purified and charged with a new meaning in that other phase of mysticism where the finite and the infinite, the individual and the universe, are conceived as a correlative couple, neither side of which can exist without the other, where man is as necessary to God as God is to man.[2] One or other of these two aspects may dominate, or they may pass into one another in never-ending bewildering alternation; but in either case the result is the same: mysticism remains essentially the principle of universal community, the doctrine of the All-One.

[1] Cf. Amos, vii., 14–15.

[2] 'Ich weiss dass ohne mich Gott nicht ein Nu kann leben,
Werd'ich zu nicht Er muss von Not den Geist auffgeben,'

—Angelus Silesius, i. 8. Many other epigrams to the same purpose might be quoted from this wonderful mystic.

And now we can understand how the mystical consciousness can become a potent instrument in the creation, revival, and conservation of religious belief. Seeing that all things are already one, the mystic does not so much desire to establish unity as to make man conscious of the unity that already prevails. His aim is not like the traditionalist's to coerce, nor like the rationalist's to convince, but to awaken. His propaganda is a light shining in darkness, a fire that warms and kindles but does not consume. His message is already written in sympathetic ink on the heart of his hearers,[1] and needs but the heat of his word to be brought out in characters of flame. We have already noted an approximation to this quickening influence in the spirit of facile imitativeness by which a tradition is caught up and transmitted. But in pure traditionalism the act of faith is essentially transitive and lives by propagation, it is a race where the torch must be passed on: mystical faith forms a chain of beacons by which light and fire are ideally communicated, while their sources remain fixed and unspent.

The illustration must not be pushed too far. Only the great mystics linked together by prophecy and retrospection across the ages can equal or transcend their predecessors in this glowing originality, this consciousness of unity with the infinite source of life in the whole. Of that primary illumination the mysticism which enters as an element into ordinary religious faith is but a feeble and flickering reflexion. Acting sometimes as a support, sometimes as a mere ornament of authoritative religion, mysticism alters the form without adding to the content of the tradition. There are three ways in which the amalgamation may be effected. First comes what may be called social mysticism. We commonly talk as if believers took their creeds on the authority of the religious community to which they belong. But the phrase applies only to the mere external profession of belief, or to such articles of a creed as are accepted without verification, like most people's notions of history and geography. Active believers do not rest content with this relation of dependence on the Church. They feel that by the very fact of membership they are contributing to its authority, to the very authority on which they believe; and this sense of unity is a particular mode of mysticism. All

[1] This was how Chalmers described Christianity to Carlyle.

corporate feeling has something of the same character, whether evoked by family, school, army, city, country, or any other community, and tends towards a personification through which the surrendered life of the component parts is returned to them in an enlarged and purified expression. The peculiarity of communities constituted by identity of religious belief lies in their power of converting that belief into what we call faith, that is a belief held, if need be, against reason by virtue of a higher evidence than reasoning on the facts of observation can afford. And this higher evidence is simply the self-consciousness of a creative act, which, in the words of the great Italian philosopher Vico, knows what it makes. The highest dogmatic expression of this mystical belief is given in the idea of a divinely human being who at once personifies the community and unites every member of it through himself with the absolute unity of things, the All-One, conceived also as a person.

Among ourselves this idea of a mystical unity giving authority to religious belief is usually associated with the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, or more remotely with those of the so-called Orthodox Church, and more feebly with those of the Anglican communion. But the privilege is one exercised in varying degrees by all Christian denominations, and by all with the same impatience of criticism; nor is there one that would not willingly identify itself with the whole of humanity. In the great historic churches the principle of mysticism has become so inextricably entwined with the principle of traditionalism that their respective contributions to individual faith cannot be accurately estimated; nor would such an analysis meet with the approval of their official apologists. But among the smaller Protestant churches the mystical element always predominates, being sustained by the greater share given to the laity in their ecclesiastical organisation, and by the employment of a more popular language in their religious meetings. And the action of these positive causes gains freer play from the absence of that historical continuity and that strongly constituted hierarchy by which the authoritative tradition of the greater churches is supported.

Nevertheless, it belongs to the paradoxical character, the unexpectedness, so to speak, of the principle with which we

are dealing, that the very mysticism they nourish and are nourished by should tend to promote the disruption of these smaller bodies and the eventual gravitation of their scattered fragments towards the great central orbs of Christendom. Chafing at the limitations of a sect necessarily narrow-minded from the disproportionate influence granted to its less educated members, and pining for something more like the mystical ideal of a world-wide community, precisely the most religious sectarians tend to break away and to drift into one or other of the churches—by preference the Roman Catholic Church—where their aspirations seem likely to meet with a fuller response. Against such tendencies a certain safeguard is provided by the phase of derivative mysticism next to be examined.

All the world's great religions offer as their credentials—or at least as a part of their credentials—a mass of documents dating from remote antiquity; and those religions with which alone we are concerned attribute this sacred literature to divine inspiration. This claim does not always originate with the writers of the books in question, some of whom would even have repudiated it as blasphemous or superstitious. But in other instances the documents do beyond doubt bear on their face the character of what professes to be a supernatural revelation; and it is from these that the whole collection has acquired its unique prestige. Such books are the production of the great mystics whose utterances take the form of communications from a higher sphere. Now, there are three ways in which religious believers, not themselves exceptionally favoured, come to the conviction that their sacred Scriptures are authentic records of a divine revelation. They may believe because they have been told so, which is the traditional method. They may believe it because the sacred writers worked miracles and foretold coming events as evidence of their supernatural gifts, which we may call the semi-rationalistic method. Or, finally, they may lay claim to as much supernatural enlightenment as shall enable them to distinguish between what is and what is not the work of a fuller and more direct inspiration in others, which is the method of secondary or derivative mysticism. Protestant pietists claim this verifying faculty in all cases where Scripture offers itself as a divine revelation,

extending its operation even to those parts of the Bible which do not describe themselves as such. In the case of these all sorts of mystical meanings have been read into documents not originally of a mystical character, dry historical records, obsolete codes, and ritualistic ordinances, in themselves of merely antiquarian interest to later ages; or perhaps I should rather say that modern believers have recourse for their several ends to a method at all times practised by the great religious mystics when embarrassed by the restraints of an authoritative literary tradition. And besides all such strained renderings there is of course the direct and literal appropriation of what the canonised mystics have had to say about their communings with the unseen.

From the mystical interpretation of Scripture we pass by a natural transition to the third form under which this seemingly incalculable source of faith allies itself with dogmatic tradition. I refer to the imaginative reading in a religious interest of nature and human life over their whole extent. The great original mystics have always loved to clothe their teaching in vivid images drawn from immediate experience of the objects and events among which their lives were spent, sometimes distinguishing themselves from the great poets only by their more strictly didactic tendencies, a true poet's aim being primarily, if not solely, the pleasure he receives and imparts. Mysticism, as cannot be too often repeated, reaches its intellectual consummation in the doctrine of the All-One, not the truly scientific doctrine that the universe is constituted of parts forming a totality where nothing can either exist or be properly understood without reference to the whole, but the doctrine of existence as an abstract self-identity, within which any distinction or separation of parts, one's own personality included, is an illusion of sense or opinion to be overcome by ascetic meditation. With mystics of the austerer type, such as Plotinus, the meditation is turned inwards, and involves a complete abstraction from sensuous perception, culminating in an ecstatic trance. The happier and more genial sort, on the contrary, look without, and create for themselves a world where the essential unity of things manifests itself by reflexion and repetition through all the infinite varieties of nature and of life. When mysticism of the second type is dominated, as within

Christianity, by a traditional monotheism, it readily interprets objects and events in the sense of a providential order where all things work together towards the final victory of good over evil—evil being understood as an attitude of self-willed independence and isolation. Believers of the more ordinary sort, the secondary and derivative mystics, when under the influence of this idea, work up their experience into a drama, with themselves as its heroes—or more frequently as its heroines—where every incident conduces towards their own private happiness. And this reading of life is singularly facilitated by the mystical indifference which welcomes good and evil fortune with equal satisfaction, as ultimately identified in the All-One. Higher and more disinterested spirits apply a similar method to the whole world's history which, according to them, is always within a measurable distance of that predestined consummation when the finite shall be swallowed up in the infinite, and the temporal in the eternal. And all alike find in the spectacle of the external world a confirmatory comment on the creed in which they have been educated or which they have adopted.

We have seen how mysticism, although it seems to be, and often is, a principle of anarchic and dispersive individuality in belief, may become an element of religious faith by reconciling itself with the claims of authoritative tradition, even reinforcing those claims by persuading the individual that his convictions have been reached through a course of private meditation, or that the church from whose dictation he accepts them draws new life from his participation in its communion. But this very alliance ultimately proves fatal to both principles by bringing out with greater clearness their inherently arbitrary and subjective character, while in particular it destroys the pretensions of mysticism to figure as an independent source of information about the hidden realities of existence. Of what value, people ask themselves, is a claim to supernatural inspiration which impartially supports every theory of the supernatural that has ever been put forth? In India the mystic is a pantheist, in Palestine a monotheist, at Alexandria some unintelligible combination of the two. Whether he sides with Arius or Athanasius is an accident of his birthplace and date. When he is the inmate of an Umbrian convent Mariolatry and transubstantiation are his delight. When he

belongs to the Society of Friends the Spirit teaches him to repudiate both. Under the tuition of Swedenborg he acquires a mass of detailed information about the unseen universe which 'mystical agnosticism,' whatever else it teaches, must teach him to discard. A very strong suspicion must be awakened that his alleged revelations, instead of being the source or verification, are merely the reflex of authoritative dictates whose origin he has forgotten. At best he speaks for himself only;[1] nor from the rationalist, at least, can he expect a hearing without giving some instance of preternatural insight in matters where his pretensions are open to verification.

When faced by a less exacting audience the mystic, like the traditionalist, appeals in the last resort to authority—to the authority of the spirit with whom he communicates for the validity of his message, to his own authority for the fact of its communication to himself. But only the greatest mystics are quite sure of their ground; and perhaps even the greatest have their hours of self-distrust. And among so suggestible a class the feeling that after all they may be deceived, if not deceivers, must grow with the increasing incredulity or indifference of their contemporaries. Some, in self-defence, have recourse to the weapons of rationalism, and develop a dialectic faculty of extraordinary strength and subtlety. Others, intellectually less gifted, or differently gifted, have recourse to methods more in unison with the spirit of personal authority, overwhelming their adversaries with rhetorical invective, or reducing them to silence by external compulsion. But as civilisation advances, bringing with it an increasing repugnance to violence in word or act, mysticism shares the general movement, and outbids the demands of toleration by evolving the last and most astounding of its paradoxes. There is, we are told, a negative moment in the All-One, or how else could it be truly *all?* Nay, more, being cannot be rightly predicated of the Absolute. Everything both is and is not. Faith and the contradiction of faith are equally true.

In presence of such an attitude one recalls the fable of the sick lion and his visitors. But whether sincere or not, the pretension to dispense with the law of contradiction cannot, of

[1] This is fully admitted by Professor William James in his 'Varieties of Religious Experience'—a book which I did not read until after this chapter was written.

course, be admitted by a rationalist. And indeed the mystic himself cannot dispute that law, since, like every other proposition, it is, according to him, both true and false.

From this extreme self-abnegation of mysticism we pass without a break to the next great bulwark of religious faith, which is the principle of scepticism. Used in this connexion, the word may awaken some surprise. But, as I have already pointed out, the slovenliness of popular phraseology must not be allowed to rob us of a valuable distinction. The rationalist properly so called is no sceptic; he does not doubt, he denies; and he denies certain propositions because they contradict what on good evidence he believes to be true. The sceptic doubts everything. He cannot be sure that there is an absolute self-existent, self-consistent order of things; or that, assuming such an order to exist, we have any means of knowing it; or that, assuming the possibility of such knowledge, the same affirmations can be made to have the same meaning for all men. His conclusions are not, as a rule, reasoned out, or are only apparently reasoned, being in fact obtained by setting the opinions of different philosophers against one another, and attributing equal authority to all. Standing at the point where the mystical tradition has reached its dialectic dissolution, he superficially generalises this into a dissolution of all truth, simply because for him truth has never had any basis but authority. Nevertheless, he continues to act as if he were surrounded by realities, by realities that can be known, and known with a knowledge accurately communicable through words. He eats and drinks, avoids passing vehicles, shows decided preferences, and freely exchanges information with his associates. All this, he tells you, is done by habit; so why not go a little further and believe by habit, that is to say, accept the prevalent religious dogmas as probably the safest, and certainly the easiest, course.

The revulsion to faith through intellectual apathy may seem a modern attitude; and so in a certain sense it is, but with a modernity that dates from the schools of Athens. The chiefs of the New Academy, their Roman disciple Cicero, and the sceptics of the empire, all professed attachment to the religion of the state. With the revival of Greek thought the same method reappeared, this time to be used in defence of an

international religion, in forms varying from the good-humoured acquiescence of Montaigne to the overbearing fanaticism of Pascal. In England scepticism has become, under a modified form, the chief official weapon of official Christianity. Our orthodox apologists have laboured to show, not indeed the weakness of dogmatists in general, but the inconsistency of the more or less rationalised religious systems from time to time set up in competition with their own, such as the Deism of the eighteenth century or the humanised Christianity of the nineteenth. Their object is, as they sometimes express it, to push their adversary over a precipice, by showing that, having gone so far, he is logically bound to go further. In other words, the arguments urged against their own religious belief may with equal or greater force be urged against the modified religious belief that he proposes to put in its place; or, if he has discarded all religion, against his ethical system, whatever that may be.

Sceptical religion in the sense of a despairing return to faith from the manifold distractions of doubt evidently amounts to no more at its best than the old appeal to authority, and is encumbered with just the same difficulties. It is equally good for all forms of Christianity, and suggests no principle by virtue of which one form should be preferred to another. Nor is this true of Christianity only. Once deny the possibility of discovering truth by reason, and all the religions of the world are placed on the same footing, including Buddhism, which, in its purest form, neither admits of a God to be worshipped nor of an immortality to be desired. And besides the difficulties accompanying all traditionalism, the believing sceptic is hampered by the further difficulty of proving that nothing can be proved. As for the peculiarly Anglican form of scepticism, the success of its most conspicuous professors has not been such as to encourage the use of so dangerous a weapon. Butler's 'Analogy' is considered to be largely responsible for the more complete unbelief which took the place of deism among the highest intellects after its publication; and Mansel's 'Limits of Religious Thought' contributed still more decisively to the spread of agnosticism during the latter part of the nineteenth century in England.

So obvious, indeed, is the weakness of scepticism as a

support to religion that in most instances it merely serves to prepare the way for another and more powerful method, for that last resource of struggling faith, the appeal to results. Our choice of a creed, it is urged, must be determined, like every other choice, by practical considerations. To prove the truth of religion no other argument is needed than the enormous benefits it has conferred on mankind. We owe to it civilisation, morality, art, and even the very science now impiously set in opposition to its claims. Impair its authority, and all the bonds of social union are relaxed. Destroy it, and society relapses into chaos. All religions have been relatively useful at the proper time and place. But that religion has the most authoritative claims on our belief which appears to have done the best service in the past and to promise the best service for the future.

For this, which I have called the method of appeal to results, there is no name in the English or any other language known to me, no single word answering to the three words traditionalism, mysticism, and scepticism, each of which sums up in itself a whole philosophy of faith. In these circumstances I propose with all diffidence to coin a new technical term; and Ophelism suggests itself to me as the most suitable that can be devised. It is formed from the Greek ὄφελος, 'use,' and therefore has etymologically the same force as Utilitarianism, a word that would have answered our purpose had it not been already appropriated as the denomination of a well-known ethical system, the system of those who hold that the ultimate end of action should be to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Ophelism, on the other hand, has to do with belief rather than with action, or with action only so far as it is determined by and justifies belief. But there is this much resemblance between the two, that ophelism, in at least one of its forms, measures the truth and falsehood of propositions by the same standard that utilitarianism applies to the value of actions, in other words, by the amount of pleasure or pain that their acceptance is calculated to produce. And the resemblance as well as the difference between the two systems seems not inappropriately indicated by the derivation of their respective names, the one from the great language of logic, the other from the great language of law.

Stated crudely, the pretensions of ophelism to measure truth

by utility are not precisely calculated to win the respect of clear-headed and honest people, and if applied to mathematical or physical science, would be apt to earn for its professors the reputation of being either fools or knaves. But an ophelist, of all men in the world, is least likely to commit himself to crude statements of a compromising nature; and to judge the canons of religious belief by the analogy of mathematical and physical science savours more of rationalism than of faith. The method is indeed Protean in its disguises, and cannot be rightly appreciated without a somewhat searching analysis of its applications, and a systematic presentation of their varieties.

Assuming that the admissibility of a belief should be measured by its adaptation to the wants of the human mind, and following the customary division of mind into intellect, will, and feeling, let us begin with the intellectual aspect of ophelism, its bearing on the relation between one belief and another as distinguished from the relation between belief and action or between belief and feeling.

Intellectual ophelism is the mental attitude of those who hold that certain propositions, otherwise quite unproved, must be accepted because their rejection might lead to the rejection of other propositions which it is very important that we should believe. An instance from the history of religious controversy will explain what is meant. At a time when the doctrine of Scriptural infallibility was entertained by a vast majority of Christians, to whatever denomination they belonged, Protestants were sometimes challenged to show cause for holding a dogma which their professed principle of private judgment forbade them to place under the aegis of ecclesiastical authority. For much in the Bible they had the mystical plea already considered, the appeal to their own consciousness of a divine voice speaking to them through the words of the sacred writer. But there were considerable portions of the canon, including at least one whole book—the Book of Esther—which, with the best will in the world, hardly lent themselves to such an interpretation, or could be distinguished by any internal marks of inspiration from ancient Jewish literature of admittedly human origin, such as Judith or Maccabees. There were besides texts irreconcilable with the acknowledged truths of science and history. To these 'difficulties,' as they were called, one general answer

was given: 'It all falls together.' To shake the authority of a single verse was to shake the authority of the whole Bible, and with the Bible the whole of religion would be overthrown. Now, this peculiar process of reasoning is an illustration of what I call intellectual ophelism. A particular proposition is upheld not because there is any direct evidence of its truth, or rather although there is direct evidence of the contrary, but because to believe it is useful in the interest of other propositions.[1] Apparently the controversialist believes that for those other propositions good evidence is forthcoming, since their truth is assumed as beyond question. If so, one might ask why the weightier truths are not left to stand on their own basis instead of being suspended over an abyss on such a precarious support. And the danger of the whole policy became evident when people took the apologists at their word, boldly accepting what they had been told was the extreme consequence of rejecting a single statement in the Biblical narrative.

In point of fact the infallibilists would have been sorely puzzled to prove any single article in their creed without the resource of an appeal to some passage taken at discretion in the Scriptures. But to seek for a deeper foundation would have exposed the logical weakness of their whole position. The inerrancy of the Biblical text was an article of the same tradition on whose authority they accepted as truths the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and indeed of all religion. And from that point of view it would certainly have been correct to say that all fell together. But to admit such an exclusive reliance on tradition would have been a dangerous concession to Roman Catholicism, which—again on principles of intellectual ophelism—was not to be tolerated for a moment, for otherwise there was no telling to what it might lead. Unfortunately, the same flexible method was equally at the service of their rivals, who might argue with as good a show of reason that the real danger

[1] 'Moses wrote the Pentateuch, we think, because if he didn't all our religious habits will have to be undone' (William James in 'Mind,' New Series, Vol. XIII., p. 471). I am not sure whether by 'religious habits' beliefs are meant. In any case the illustration seems rather unfortunate, as Moses did *not* write the Pentateuch, a fact of which one would expect the accomplished colleague of Professor Toy to be aware. Professor James is a master of humour, and may here be indulging in a little self-ironisation, but the context looks perfectly serious.

lay in not accepting Papal infallibility, a dogma of which the ophelistic origin is sufficiently obvious, although it is officially placed under the protection of a manufactured tradition.

Leaving intellectual ophelism to its inevitable dissolution in the hands of theological controversialists, the rationalist pierces through all these disguises and evasions of the real question at issue to find himself confronted by a second line of defence. Pushed to an extreme, this method exhibits a train of logical consequences in which each belief is held for the sake of another belief, and dogma after dogma is interpreted as the means to an end, until we reach the ultimate dogmas of God and immortality. It is possible, and I believe the attempt has been made, to treat the existence of God as a logical value, as itself the only evidence of all other truth. But as the argument, if pressed home, would cast considerable doubt on the reality of the books in which it figures—not to speak of their alleged authors—we may safely neglect it and pass on to what in any case would come after it. This is the argument from the ethical utility of religious belief, or what in our phraseology may be called the method of practical ophelism.

That morality would perish, or at least be seriously endangered unless we believed in God, with or without the adjunct of a future life, is an idea that seems to have originated with Plato, from whose philosophy it probably passed to Christianity. At any rate, there is not, to my knowledge, any trace of it in the Hebrew Scriptures. So far from inferring God's existence from the necessity of our being moral, the prophets of Israel inferred, contrariwise, that we ought to be good because there is a God who will punish us if we are not so, and reward us if we are.

Making religion subservient to practical ends, moral or otherwise, is indeed a symptom of decaying belief; and Plato himself is more than suspected of having privately thrown over the mythology that he publicly recommends to others. But be this as it may, the moral efficacy of a religion cannot, apart from mystical pretensions, be offered in evidence of its truth.[1]

[1] I refer to such phenomena as the 'conviction of sin,' which, to those who experience them, may count as direct evidence of supernatural influence. In their case faith is not ophelistic, but mystical.

It is implied that false beliefs cannot lead to right conduct. But this is a more than questionable assumption. Experience rather goes to prove the contrary. Patients are habitually deceived, to their great benefit, by their nurses and doctors; and nothing is more frequent than for good-tempered masters, in correcting the faults of their dependents, to affect an anger they do not feel, in the well-grounded persuasion that the efficacy of their reproofs will thereby be increased. In such cases the illusion exercises its beneficent influence notwithstanding the numerous instances where it has been exposed, simply because people as a rule believe what they are told. Why, then, should not alleged supernatural sanctions, whose unreality, assuming them to be unreal, is far more difficult of exposure, be credited with the same power? And assuming them to be real, how would their efficacy be thereby increased when verification in this life is impossible to any one but a mystic?[1]

There seems to be a general repugnance to admit that the universe can be run on lines of deceit. But one would like to know first of all what is meant by ascribing veracity to the universe. Assuming the providential government of the world —that is to say, assuming things to be ordered for the best by a Being of perfect goodness and wisdom—a case might be made out for the contention that such a Being would not permit his creatures to be lured by false promises into courses useless or injurious to themselves. In view of the disenchantment proverbially attending the satisfaction of desire, a rationalist would hardly grant so much without considerable reservations; and he might add that such an intimate acquaintance with the details of the divine administration as seems implied by the argument amounted to a revival of the mystical pretensions with which we have already parted company. But in truth the existence of a providential government is the very doctrine that the appeal to consequences has been used to establish; and to base the validity of such an appeal on the assumed existence of Providence is a vicious circle which may not unfairly be thrown into the following form: There is a God, because, if there were not, God would not permit the belief in his existence to be associated with virtuous conduct.

[1] By a curious irony, it is precisely among mystics that a morality dependent on hope and fear is most severely condemned.

A rationalist, it may be urged, should not deny that the universe is rational. Certainly not; but neither will he allow himself to be fobbed off with vague epigrammatic phrases. Rationality, when predicated of impersonal subjects, means no more than that they are consistent with themselves, that contradictory statements cannot truly be made about them. It is a moot-point among philosophers whether this self-consistency does or does not imply the constancy of natural law; that is, the principle that in the same circumstances the same antecedent is followed by the same consequent whatever may be the time or place of the occurrence. But whether it is a necessary truth in this sense or not, the constancy of natural law does not exclude the possibility of beneficent illusions.

Again the modern theological apologist sees his chance, and intervenes. 'This famous constancy of natural law,' he says, 'is itself, after all, an article of faith. No experience can prove it, for experience is of the past, not of the future. That the future will resemble the past is a practical postulate, accepted on no other evidence than that it works well. Yet the human mind entertains no firmer conviction; and we are content to rest our faith in God on the same basis. It works well; without it we could not act morally; in other words, we could not be ourselves.' It may be observed that in no case can the existence of God as a working postulate stand on the same level with the constancy of natural law; for the argument assumes that what has worked well in the past will continue to work well in the future; in other words, it assumes that the order of nature is constant, thereby admitting the higher generality of that principle as compared with the highest principle in theology. Thus, even if the rationalist stood committed to a general act of faith in assuming the constancy of nature, he might without inconsistency refuse to follow the theologian in going on to a second and more particular act of faith, not logically necessitated by the first. What Occam said of entities applies also to practical postulates. They ought not to be unnecessarily multiplied.

But in point of fact there is no such primary practical postulate as that which the apologist assumes. The constancy of nature is no mere working hypothesis, but a pure speculative generalisation, imposed on us by the phenomena, not imposed

on them by us, in spite of all the efforts made by ophelists to reverse the relation. The fallacy lies in their assumption that we have no experience of the future. It might plausibly be maintained that we have experience of nothing else. Ever since time began for us, future time has been turning itself into past time, and always with the same result, the result of proving that between them there is no difference except the difference of position, each portion of time exhibiting exactly the same properties as its predecessor, and no portion, as pure time, having the slightest power to alter its content, any more than the number of a collection of marbles is altered by altering the order in which they are arranged. All changes occur in time; but time itself is not a principle of change, and we are as sure of this as we are that time exists at all, that is to say we know it by reason, not by faith.[1]

If a rationalist could satisfy himself that right conduct, at least with the mass of mankind, depended on religious belief, he might, in the interest of morality, refrain from pointing out that religion is in whole or part untrue. And, no doubt, there have been many rationalists who have kept their disbelief a secret from all but a few intimate friends through dread of the mischief that might be done by its publication. But others have denied the assumed connexion between faith and conduct, contending either that men's speculative convictions have nothing to do with their behaviour one way or the other, or that the wilful suppression of truth must sooner or later exercise a deleterious influence on morality. And a third class, very numerously represented at the present day, while freely admitting the great services rendered by religion in former ages, and agreeing with the theologians about the necessary dependence of practice on theory, hold that it is high time to replace the discredited doctrines of religion by the more assured results of modern science. It must, however, be distinctly understood that such speculations, however interesting they may be, take

[1] This argument was suggested to me in conversation by an American friend, Mr. Leo Stein. However, I am not quite sure that he would be satisfied with my way of putting it. I mention this in order that, if he should ever state his views at length, which is otherwise much to be desired, the claim to priority may not be disputed. On the whole subject cf. Tyndall's reply to Mozley's Bampton Lectures ('Fragments of Science,' Vol. II., p. 8, *seqq.*)

us outside the field of rationalism properly so called, which is limited to the destructive cricitism of religious belief. The work of demolition may or may not have its use in preparing the ground for future construction; in an age of great intellectual activity it is certain to be carried forward regardless of consequences.

But the attitude of external criticism in reference to this issue is a point of comparatively small importance. The appeal to consequences as a test of truth is most effectually answered by the consequences themselves. We have seen how each principle of irrational belief, traditionalism, mysticism, and scepticism, has by logical development turned into the refutation of itself. And the same process of dialectical dissolution takes place also when religion seeks to base itself on practical utility, only by a more deadly because a more intrinsic necessity of decay. For a transcendental theology cannot be associated with a purely human morality without converting one or other, or in extreme cases both the one and the other, into the contradiction of itself. A few very simple considerations will show us how the process works out.

Let us first regard religious belief, or faith in an unseen immutable eternal self-conscious reality whence we come and whither we return, as the fixed standard to whose laws morality must conform. Logically carried out, this belief implies that our intensest world-interests are totally insignificant in comparison with the existence which awaits us after death, and which a few elect spirits can faintly realise even in this life by a continuous effort of meditation and abstraction. On the path to such perfection, domestic, social, and civic ties are rather hindrances than helps. And its divergence from the lines of progressive civilisation is wide. When looked at from the ascetic point of view, great organised efforts for the diffusion of culture, for the equalisation of wealth, for the mitigation of disease, for the prolongation of life, for the abolition of war, for the humanisation of penal law, for the protection of the helpless, can look for little encouragement on the side of religion. These things are trifling in comparison with the tremendous issues of eternity. Comprehensive schemes of reform seem designed to supersede the providence of God. They are a drain on energies that had better be spent on devotional exercises or on missions

to convert the adherents of other creeds. Besides, the pain, sickness, and death which it is proposed to diminish are not evils to the religious mind; on the contrary, they are often incentives to religion.

A more indirect but not less mischievous form of anti-social influence is set up by the tendency of mystics all over the world to promote celibacy and monasticism. I do not now refer to the frightful corruptions that have grown up under the shadow of those institutions, although such a reference would not be irrelevant in the present connexion. I refer to the loss inflicted on the community by the withdrawal of some of its best members into a sphere where the world benefits less than it otherwise would by their good qualities, and on posterity which loses even more by the fact that those qualities are not allowed to be transmitted to offspring.

Nor is it only with the loss of so much good that we have to reckon, but also with actual and positive evil. Mysticism leads, as we have seen, by its very nature, to the formation of religious communities, and every such community is a state within the state, exhibiting not seldom the character of a morbid growth, draining the body politic of nutriment, promoting interests adverse to the interests of the state, and sometimes conspiring with foreign enemies for its destruction. And this maleficent action on the environment is accompanied by a dangerous relaxation of discipline within. The private vices of wealthy members are looked at with an indulgent eye. Ability is more valued than honesty in the choice of those through whom dealings with the outer world are transacted; and dissensions with rival sects give occasion for the freest use of falsehood and calumny.

So much for morality. As for the original purpose for which the community exists, that is the cultivation of sustained relations with the spiritual world, it is apt to be put out of sight by the very machinery designed for its support. Familiarity with the details of a working organisation does not exactly supply the best training for entering into modes of experience where the ordinary laws of space, time, and causality are supposed to be in abeyance. It sometimes happens also that the abundant leisure and accumulated means of learning secured by conventual life give occasion to the most gifted members of the confraternity

for the free use of their reason on religious questions, resulting in a complete loss of belief.

So much for what happens when conduct is subordinated to faith. Turn we now to the opposite method, the subordination of faith to conduct. From this point of view—itself largely due to the advance of rationalism—human morality is assumed as something absolutely sacred, and nowise to be tampered with in the interests of ecclesiastical creeds and organisations, or neglected on the plea of an absorbing preoccupation with the vision of an invisible world. To this human morality supernatural religion is conceived as being related very much as the executive government in a state is related to its laws ; that is, as supplying them with a sanction. But while in secular society the nature of the sanction is perfectly unambiguous, there is more difficulty about understanding what it amounts to in the moral government of the world. Theologians of a former generation had no doubts on the subject. For them it meant an appropriate distribution, after death, of rewards and punishments unimaginable in their intensity and duration. Since then it has come to be more and more clearly understood that—quite apart from the incredible barbarism of this arrangement—none but the selfish and cowardly could be reached by such motives, that a morality based on hope and fear is no morality at all. At present the most fashionable view seems to be that this life should be interpreted as a preparation for the next. But it is open to more than one fatal objection. Most persons are made rather less than more fit for the things of the spirit by their experience of the world, and so far had better not have been born into it at all. Those who seem to have profited by mundane discipline would be the first to acknowledge that they owe their success to a happy combination of circumstances. It would therefore be gross favouritism if they were to enjoy a privileged position in the next world. And it is difficult, or rather impossible, to imagine how the experiences of the world as we know it can be an effective preparation for a world in which there is neither property, nor marriage, nor death. Some apologists have argued as if to deny immortality was to rob human life of all meaning and value. The charge might with better reason be retorted against their own belief.

In view of these difficulties some theologians have shown

a tendency to focus the light of religion on the duties and problems of our present state, leaving our future existence, if any, to take care of itself. They would look on God rather as helping everything that is high and striving against everything that is low in human nature, than as an avenger of what can no longer be undone. Assuredly the consciousness of receiving supernatural companionship and aid in the struggle towards a nobler life is a stimulant whose power cannot easily be overrated. But it would be easy to overrate the extent to which that consciousness is felt as an actual experience by the mass of religious believers. It is, in fact, the exclusive privilege of mystics; and the claims of mysticism have been dealt with already. With less imaginative moralists the effort to realise their conscience as an objective spirit soon becomes fatiguing, and is finally abandoned. Moreover, a person whose will depends for its fulfilment on the co-operation of his own creatures is apt to fade into an abstract law or a collective name for the totality of tendencies that make for righteousness. Purely humanistic ideals have an elective affinity for purely naturalistic metaphysics.

Another influence working in the same direction must not be overlooked. Truth and sincerity are virtues ranking as high in the scale of the ethical religionist as they rank low in the scale of the opposite school, the theological absolutists. But truth and sincerity are the deadly enemies of practical ophelism. Their ideals are best exemplified by the researches of modern science and modern scholarship where objective facts count for everything and subjective consequences for nothing. Hence those who have been brought up in the schools of ethical theology have frequently been observed to abandon the faith of their teachers with extraordinary facility.

'How, then, it may be asked, 'are we to explain the fact that faith, mystical or otherwise, is so often associated with right conduct, that the leaders of religious thought and the chiefs of established hierarchies are in many instances distinguished not only by the saintliness of their private lives, but also by their ardent participation in works of public beneficence? Do men gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles?' No, they do not; but vines and fig-trees may

grow in the same field with thorns and thistles. To ascertain the law of a particular tendency, we must study it in isolation, not under the complex conditions of modern society. To say that the eminent persons referred to have developed their enthusiasm of humanity in obedience to other influences than those by which they profess to be actuated, is to say no more than what they themselves habitually assert of opponents whose disinterested virtue they cannot deny. In either case the spirit of the age, acting on a naturally good disposition, may be offered as a satisfactory solution of the paradox. The real question is, how the spirit of the age came to be what it is, and why it contrasts so favourably with the ages of faith? But this is not all. The spirit of rivalry and competition has also to be taken into account. It is not the most admirable of motives, but it is often a powerful motive for good. The Churches, whose hold on the world is already sorely shaken, would lose what popularity they still retain did they not vie with secular agencies in promoting the material interests of mankind.

It appears, then, that the appeal to results which we call practical ophelism is doomed to failure, less from its logical irrelevance than because it merely serves to exhibit with startling clearness the essential incompatibility of the religious with the ethical ideal. What the conduct of religious believers may be said to prove is, that they have failed to realise the meaning of their creed, since, literally interpreted, it demands the sacrifice of the ends for which society exists—and this quite apart from the lamentably frequent cases where it is to their private or corporate interests that the sacrifice is made.

In truth, the argument from results owes far less to any evidence that can be quoted in its support than to its deep-seated connexion with the principle of authority to which analysis is perpetually bringing us back as the bedrock of religious faith. It has been shown how that principle implies the identification, quite natural to rudimentary thought, between belief and obedience. Now, so long as this confusion is permitted to continue, the rationalist will be treated as a rebel, that is to say, he will, if possible, be removed from the community by death, imprisonment, exile, or social ostracism.

When such means are no longer available, it will be insinuated that he has discarded religion as an inconvenient check on the indulgence of his vicious inclinations. When his respectability can no longer be questioned, it will be attributed to fear of the laws or of public opinion. When his disinterested virtue wins general recognition, and his society comes to be rather courted than avoided by the religious believers themselves, credit is given to early training, good example, and a certain diffused religiosity more easily assumed than defined. But all the imputations once lavished on his intellectual ancestors are now transferred with accumulated interest to his intellectual posterity, to an imaginary society of the future among whom faith, and therefore morality, shall have become extinct. Of their depravity the orgies of the Roman empire combined with the horrors of the French Revolution offer but a feeble forecast. The public, however, grow rather tired of waiting for the fulfilment of prophecies destined to be renewed as often as they fall due, and amuse themselves in the mean time by scrutinising with increased severity the not unimpeachable morals of the prophets themselves. At this juncture the impatience for immediate results leads from practical to emotional ophelism.

Frankly stated, this amounts to saying that a belief must be true if it gives a great deal of pleasure, or, what comes to the same thing, that the contradictory belief must be false if it gives a great deal of pain. Such an attitude is not unknown in the ordinary business of life; and one may even go the length of saying that many an important enterprise would never have been prosecuted to a successful issue had not its promoters been animated by a sanguine optimism far exceeding what was justified by a reasonable view of the facts. But in these instances hope has fulfilled itself by kindling a courage which would have been extinguished at the outset by a clear vision of the dangers to be risked and the difficulties to be overcome. And the cases are, perhaps, more numerous in which a sanguine temper, by encouraging a miscalculation of consequences, has led to failure and ruin. At any rate, it will be admitted that the power of our wishes over things in themselves cannot extend beyond the power of our will; that is, it can only affect the

future, and of the future only so much as is given us to control. Neither past events nor inaccessible realities can be changed by what we think about them or say about them, however much thought and expression themselves may come under the empire of emotion. All this is indeed part of the traditional wisdom of the nursery, where children are taught from their tenderest years that tears can neither put spilt milk back in the jug nor draw the moon down from heaven. But such homely lessons are considered wholly inapplicable to the sphere of faith. It seems to be assumed by our theological governesses, first, that God exists because we should feel very lonesome without him, and next, in tacit acknowledgment of the part played by fiction, that, having been invested with perfect wisdom by our idealising aspirations, his purposes can be indefinitely altered to suit our requirements. So also to most men death is dreadful, and life only lasts on the condition that it should be so regarded; yet for some forms of theology death must be an illusion, because it would be too dreadful that what countless experiences have made the strongest of certainties should be a reality after all.

In the world of observation and reasoning we are taught to look realities in the face; and on the whole, those are most respected who have learned the lesson best. But while it is the very principle of rationalism to extend the methods of observation and reasoning from the common things of life to all life and all existence, it is the principle of faith to draw a line of demarcation between those common things and the limiting facts of experience. Now, we have seen how, directly that line is drawn, self-contradiction begins on the side of faith. And of no anti-rational principle is this so true as of emotional ophelism, because nothing varies so much from one individual to another as the emotions excited by beliefs about the unseen, and nowhere is the adage more applicable that 'one man's meat is another man's poison.' The number of those is not few who declare, with every appearance of sincerity, that they have no wish for immortality, and if it were offered to them would reject it with horror. And among the sincere believers in that doctrine many have found their closing years overcast with gloom by reflecting on the tremendous possibilities of perdition. So appalling, indeed, to modern susceptibilities is the thought of that fate's overtaking any single soul—let alone the belief once confidently

and complacently entertained by many theologians that the number of the lost would vastly exceed the number of the saved—that an ever-increasing tendency to discard it is observable in the Protestant Churches. And assuredly, if our beliefs are to be determined by our wishes, Universalism ought to carry the day. But experience shows that Universalism is merely the transitional stage from the doctrine of the probable damnation of most men to the doctrine of the more than probable extinction of all. Nor is this more than what might have been expected from the known laws of human nature. For no creed could survive if it abolished that fear of death which, as I have said, is the very condition of life—fear for those under our care, if not fear for ourselves.

Some Stoical optimists profess to set little value on the hope of immortality, holding that whatever happens, being the will of God, must be for our good; and a recent Swiss theologian censures the earliest Christian Churches for not perceiving that death is God's best gift to man.[1] But is Theism itself a desirable doctrine? Not, of course, in the sense of being true, for emotional ophelism has nothing to do with unalterable realities, but in the sense of what we prefer to believe. Certainly the answer will not be an invariable affirmative on the part of the wisest and best of mankind. For there are some persons, more particularly sensitive women, not by any means pessimists but rather meliorists, whose feelings and consciences are so impressed by the miseries of the world that they shrink back appalled from the thought of making a personal being responsible for its creation and administration. If for them the substance of things hoped for identifies itself with the evidence of things not seen, it will be of things which are not seen only because they do not yet exist, but which will come into existence by a process of regular evolution from the things that are seen.

It might seem as if, with the form of emotional ophelism just considered, we had touched the bottom of unreason. But there is still a lower deep. Faith holds in reserve a last appeal to the power of self-delusion. And with the examination of this method our analysis will be fitly concluded.

For the mystic, nature is the living garment of God; for the

[1] Paul Wernle in 'Die Anfänge unserer Religion.'

moralist, he realises himself in the daily performance of duty; but for the mass of believers something is needed that appeals more vividly to sense and imagination, while involving a less severe strain on the intellect and will. And their wants are amply satisfied by the external forms of worship, grand edifices filled within and without with a wealth of plastic and pictorial decoration, solemn or stirring music, chanted prayers, soaring hymns, sweet incense, priests clad in rich vestments, unctuous pulpit orators holding numerous and well-dressed congregations spell-bound by their eloquence. Then, for an occasional excitement, they have street processions or pilgrimages; while, as a relief from the monotony of home-life or from exhausting social dissipation, for the more studious there is the perusal of devout literature—especially in a periodical form—and for the more personally minded, the conversation of saintly or, at any rate, amiable and dignified ecclesiastics; while all alike come under the vague diffused charm of august historic traditions and cities that perpetuate an immemorial name.

All this we call the aesthetic side of religion, the body and fair appearance of which religious beliefs are the soul and essence, the presence under whose pressure it seems intolerable that those beliefs should be impugned. And the religions which have the most effective command of this meretricious machinery use it freely not only for the retention of their own followers, but also for winning proselytes from other sects, with the result of driving their rivals to employ the same arts. Not many, perhaps, would acknowledge to others, or to themselves, that they have chosen their faith as they might choose a villa-residence, because it is pretty and picturesque;[1] nor would this method be so readily utilised as the others in the warfare against rationalism. Still, if not precisely pressed as an argument, the pleasure afforded by the decorative element in religion remains a potent factor in belief, and as such may find a place in our scheme under the name of aesthetic ophelism.

Yet nothing can be more opposed to the true spirit of religion than aestheticism, and nowhere is the dissolving dialectic of unreason more apparent. The mystic restorers of religion

[1] Since the above was written, I have found it very frankly acknowledged by a character, meant to be very estimable, in a novel called 'The Challoners,' by Mr. E. F. Benson, who, being an Archbishop's son, presumably has some insight into the methods of faith.

held its decorative adjuncts in abhorrence. Aesthetic emotion deals only with the surfaces of things; or rather, for it the surface is the thing, the curtain is the picture. On the subjective side it is an ideal activity, directed to no ulterior end, content with the pleasure of the moment, and sustained by a perpetual variation of excitements, none of which must go deep or be continued long lest the freshness of sensibility so necessary to pure enjoyment should be impaired. Now, of all tempers this calculated frivolity is most adverse to the seriousness of the mystic, this sensuousness to his spirituality, this superficiality and fickleness to his absorption in the eternal and unseen. Yet in the dialectic development of unreason these things have their place not less surely than his own ecstasies, of which, in truth, they are the necessary and ultimate outcome. Denounced as idolatry they tremble and vanish before the furious blast of his indignation, only to reappear sooner or later in the train of the new movement he has started, until another mystic rises up and resumes his tradition, repeating the same protest with the same result.

And so the process might go on for ever were not other and more revolutionary forces simultaneously brought into play. Religious aestheticism involves the necessity of continually declining on a lower range of interesting effects, simply because to win support it must operate on wider circles of the community. The decorative element is vulgarised by progressive adaptation to less educated tastes. As a first consequence, the more cultivated classes turn away with disgust from religious ceremonies—under which sermons and pietistic readings are understood to be included—and devote themselves to secular art and literature. At the same time the presentation of self-contradictory dogmas and incredible stories in plastic form provokes rationalistic criticism, just as practical ophelism, by claiming the most advanced morality as the fruit and verification of faith, serves to emphasise the contrast between modern ideals of righteousness and the immoralities inherited from barbarous modes of thought.

The loss of educated adherents might be borne with equanimity, especially in a democratic age, but for a further development in which all classes are interested, and the poorest perhaps most of all. To keep up and extend the external

apparatus of religion is a costly operation involving an unproductive expenditure of money to which no limits can be assigned. Money must then be procured in ever increasing amounts, and hierarchies all over the world have shown little scrupulousness or delicacy in the means employed for that pious purpose. Subsidies are drawn from the state at the risk of undermining its finances, and pious individuals are bullied or coaxed into benefactions from which their own families are the first sufferers. As centralisation increases, the most religious regions, which are often the poorest, are drained of their resources to adorn the metropolis with sumptuous places of worship.[1] And everywhere the support of the Church party is put up to auction, with the result of hampering the public services and sometimes of involving the country in ruinous wars.

The possession of wealth and power leads to corruption. Even if, under its temptations, the good did not become slothful and self-indulgent, in the case of a parasitic organisation—and all religious communities are by the law of their existence parasitic—they would tend to be crowded out of its more lucrative offices by intriguing and self-interested competitors. Not only the laity, but the lower ranks of the clergy are pillaged to support the higher in luxury and idleness, if not in actual vice; and a repulsive contrast is exhibited between the practice and the professions of those who chiefly represent religion, as well as between the splendour of religious ceremonies and the squalid misery of those by whose labour it is maintained. Meantime, the accumulated wealth of the priesthood excites the envy and cupidity of the more openly predatory classes, who finally take advantage of its unpopularity to pull down the whole fabric and to enrich themselves with its spoils.

In this way religions perish through the very agencies on which their hopes of perpetuity were based. For the fate that befalls them is not a mere loss of wealth, power, and consideration. As the beauty of their material expression had won credence for the doctrines it symbolised, so the hatred and loathing engendered by long experience of the abuses with which it is connected lead among the multitude to an equally unreasonable, but equally natural repudiation of their truth,

[1] What this leads to has been shown by the experience of Solomon, of Pericles, and of Leo X.

lead among the educated classes to a more candid examination of the rationalistic arguments in their disproof. Not that the opportuneness of rationalism has anything to do with the ideal value of its criticisms, which are no more strengthened by the evil consequences of religious belief, than they are logically discredited by its alleged beneficent influence on morals and art; but it has much to do with their success.

Our analysis of faith, as distinguished from and opposed to reason, is now complete. Apart from those enumerated, the motives that make for religious belief are identical in kind with those that make for any other kind of speculative belief, and are subject to the same canons of evidence. And it is only with beliefs upheld on such grounds that rationalism has to deal. Reasoning presupposes reason in those to whom it is addressed. But in order to clear the ground for its application it was first necessary to set out with the utmost possible distinctness and precision, those influences by which the mind is habitually perturbed in its search for information about the ultimate reality of things.

Such exactitude is alien to the habits of theological discussion, and perhaps not very favourable to the pretensions of theology. Modern theologians, no doubt, make a great show of logic, and sometimes refer with pride to their predecessors, the mediaeval schoolmen, as masters and models of the art. How far they are sincere in their professions may be ascertained, among other ways, by a comparison with the controversial methods of philosophers and men of science. The latter have their faults; they may suppress or distort facts, they may appeal to vulgar prejudices, they may impute bad motives to their opponents. But these are faults of particular individuals or of human nature in general, not of the class to which they belong; and to be found guilty of them is discreditable. With theologians they are habitual, and are neither censured nor apologised for. A high standard of truth and honour is no more expected of them than of the detective police. And that is because, like the police, they look on themselves as pitted against criminals who are not entitled to fair play. Their whole idea of honour seems to be to do the best they can for the side on which they are retained, with this difference, of course, from

the ordinary English lawyer, that they are always on the side of the crown. That they have chosen this side from rational conviction is hard to believe in view of the pleas by which they support it. Thus we are obliged to fall back on the supposition that their creed has really been determined by one or other of the four methods, or by two or more of them acting in combination.

Probably none of the four methods ever does act alone, at least among the more educated minds of the present day. The least complex of moderns is not likely to believe a dogma, that is to accept it with genuine conviction, merely because he has been told that it is true, or because it has been borne in on him by a supposed supernatural revelation, or because it seems as probable as anything else that can be stated on the subject, or because, if he denied it, he might be compelled to deny something else and never know where to stop, or because he might misconduct himself unless he believed it, or because the contrary belief is very shocking, or, finally, because it is associated with a number of agreeable recollections and anticipations. But all these motives are present together in a vague, voluminous, undifferentiated mass, in proportions varying with the idiosyncrasy of the believer, or they relieve each other in such rapid succession as to form a single enclosing circle of light.

Neither has it been meant to imply that the historical evolution of the four methods strictly corresponds to the order of dialectical development in which they are here set out. Such linear series are the most convenient for purposes of abstract exposition, but they do not represent the concrete life of the spirit. Still it would not, perhaps, be too much to say that the order here adopted corresponds fairly well with the order in which the lines of resistance are raised against the encroachments of reason on religious belief in the majority of minds that have experienced its conquering advance.

Nor, lastly, would it be true to say that traditionalism, mysticism, and the rest of them, are exclusively associated with the service of religion. On the contrary, my object throughout has been to emphasise the fact that these auxiliaries to faith are themselves essentially faithless, and when pressed home have a tendency to swing round to the opposite side. But although they may be found fighting for rationalistic conclusions, the

rationalist, as such, will not appeal to them for support. He will not say, for example, that this or that doctrine must be untrue because it has been rejected by a majority of the greatest intellects in modern Europe; although he may fairly urge such a consideration in rebutting an appeal to intellectual authority on the other side. And in forecasting the immediate or remote future of opinion, he may quote such a transference of authority as an element of prediction. To say, apart from all experience, that reason must conquer in the end, would be mysticism of the most irrational type. But it is perfectly legitimate to argue that among the unconscious forces by which human destiny is determined, some show a decided preponderance over the rest; and that these victorious forces ally themselves by preference with the rational side of human nature. And the spread of rationalism in modern society, supposing it to be admitted, might well be cited in verification of such an inference. At the same time it must not be imagined for a single moment that rationalists stake the truth of their contention on the event of its ultimate success or failure with the mass of mankind. Disagreeing as they do with the majority through all the past, they would remain unshaken by the foreknowledge, were such foreknowledge possible, that the disagreement would continue through all future time. For the date of an opinion about reality leaves reality itself unchanged; and the earth will go on moving even if another glacial period should throw back civilisation to a stage still lower than that of the authority by which Galileo was condemned.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN RATIONALISM AND CHRISTIANITY TO THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Rationalism has been defined in the preceding chapter as the tendency to use reason for the destruction of religious belief. We know not when this destructive action began, when the reality of that supernatural world which religion professes to reveal was first denied; but we know that the denial is very ancient and wide-spread. It is even probable that, as some have conjectured, the progress from lower to higher forms of religion has been everywhere determined by something like rationalistic criticism. But this much is certain, that for us of the Western world it begins with ancient Greece. In the sixth century before our era the thinkers of Ionia had already convinced themselves that the world was an orderly whole owing its origin to natural causes, that is causes homogeneous with those by which ordinary changes in the weather are produced. And one of the first consequences of this conviction was the discovery that the religion in which they had been educated, that is the polytheistic mythology of Homer and Hesiod, was untrue. For the many imperfect and passionate gods of popular belief, varying in their characteristics with the physiognomy of their worshippers, they substituted a single deity in whom there was nothing human but his knowledge and that was without bounds. Some went so far as to deny the existence even of this attenuated abstraction, explaining the universe solely by the action of material forces; while others again sought to reform the old religion by clearing it of such absurdities and immoralities as were too obviously inconsistent with the ideals of contemporary culture.

Along with other elements of Greek civilisation Greek rationalism passed over to Rome, to be taken up with far more

enthusiasm, and propagated with far more freedom of utterance than public opinion in Greece, or at least in Athens, had permitted. For the religion of Rome, being a degraded fetichism kept under strict control, and used as an instrument of statecraft by her rulers, had never excited such emotions of reverence and affection as were associated with the worship of Zeus, Apollo, and Athene. But the serious and practical Roman genius could not rest content with mere negation. From the immense mass of material placed at his disposal by Greek philosophy Cicero singled out as best fitted for his countrymen the elements of what is still called Natural Religion, although nothing more unnatural, in the sense of remoteness from primitive conceptions, has ever been devised. There is one God worshipped under various names by all the nations of the world. Belief in his existence is innate in the human mind. He upholds the distinction between right and wrong, our knowledge of which is also innate, and punishes violations of the moral law either in this life or in another. After the explanations given in the preceding chapter, we can easily recognise in this apparently simple creed a highly complex and unstable combination of traditionalism, mysticism, and ethical ophelism. But it is also the first great result of rationalistic criticism systematically applied to religious belief, and long supplied a refuge from the oppression exercised on reason by more elaborate and exacting superstitions.

Meanwhile a people not less extraordinary, though far more limited in its endowment than the Greeks and Romans, had been cherishing with indestructible tenacity a religion which, more than any other, seemed to realise the dreams of an eclectic philosophy. The researches of modern scholarship have as yet thrown little light on the origin of Hebrew monotheism. There seems, however, to be a general agreement that it was a desert-faith, peculiar to certain nomadic tribes, and geographically associated with the Sinaitic peninsula; that the Beni-Israel carried this religion with them into the more fertile districts of Palestine, where their old faith became to some extent corrupted by contact with the idolatrous polytheism of its earlier inhabitants, great numbers of whom were incorporated with their own tribes; and that they were recalled to the purity of

their primitive creed by the vigorous preaching of prophets whose home was in the desert. Now it is a very remarkable circumstance that these monotheistic teachers assailed the superstitious worship of their apostate fellow-Semites in Canaan and Babylon with sarcasms substantially akin to the more measured satire directed by the Greek and Roman freethinkers against the anthropomorphic religion of their countrymen. Thus from a very early period the Jewish mind received a rationalistic impress never since lost, and perhaps connected with the unsettled habits of a nomadic race.

Nevertheless there is not, if I rightly remember, a single passage in the whole of Greek and Latin literature tending to show that the heathen rationalists were aware of any affinity between themselves and the Jews, while there are many passages referring to them as a peculiarly and notoriously superstitious race. Nor, in truth, were the two doctrines on their positive side of the same type. Imbued with the generous and humanitarian spirit of Hellas, Stoic monotheism conceived God as the common Father and legislator of all men. Hebrew monotheism conceived God as the old tribal Iahveh raised to supreme power, as a still mightier King of Babylon, choosing his ministers and favourites from his own people, burdening his courtiers with the performance of wearisome ceremonies, punishing ritual transgressions more severely than moral crimes, and identifying morality itself with obedience to his will. The study, not merely of the Law, but still more of the pedantic commentaries by which the Law had been fenced in, would leave the ablest Jews little leisure to absorb the liberal spirit of Hellenic literature and science, even if contact with heathen teachers had not been dreaded as a pollution ; while at the same time the study of sacred books, in which history was entirely rewritten and unscrupulously falsified in the interest of ritualistic Iahvism, left all Jews under the persuasion that the world existed only as a theatre for supernatural intervention continually exerted on behalf of themselves as a nation, or of the more devout among their number.

Yet so potent were the germs of a higher life among this marvellous people, that again and again they broke through the rough integuments of Judaism, seeking and finding communication with what was noblest in Hellenic thought. Philo's

attempt to allegorise the Pentateuch into a pictorial rendering of Platonising Stoicism, though abortive, was a sign of the times. So also was the more successful effort of the Essenes and Therapeutae to naturalise the Pythagorean discipline in Jewish communities. And many another movement, carrying in itself the promise and potency of a vast religious revolution, may have been cut short by some untoward accident without leaving the faintest trace of its short-lived existence in contemporary literature.

Such, indeed, would have been the fate of Christianity but for an extraordinary combination of circumstances. But in saving it from destruction those circumstances deflected the new growth very widely from its original direction. What began as a home-mission to the most destitute and degraded classes in Palestine, with the promise of a good time coming, when the poor were to inherit the earth, and the earth was to yield its fruits without laborious tillage, became, in the hands of some Hellenistic Jews, a crusade against the idolatry, vice, and selfishness of the heathen world, and ended in the substitution of a manufactured for a spontaneous mythology. The initiator of the whole movement had hated publicity, had studiously deprecated attention to his own personality, had hoped to be forgotten in the kingdom of heaven like salt in the dish, like leaven in the dough, like the seed in the tree. And he desired that the same self-effacement should be practised by his successors in the work of evangelisation. We know from the experience of modern India what happens in such cases. The English general who indignantly chastises his worshippers, is rewarded by a double measure of their adoration.[1] The Hindoo preacher of a purer faith is exalted to a niche in the Pantheon which he has tried to pull down.[2] Jesus was first identified with the expected founder of a restored Davidic dynasty, such as the old prophets had foretold, then with the idea of collective humanity, then with an emanation from the Supreme God, then with Almighty God himself.

But our business is not with the history of religion, or with the history of religion only in so far as it affects the history of

[1] This is what actually happened to John Nicholson.

[2] Lyall's 'Asiatic Studies,' Vol. I., pp. 62–64.

rationalism. And in this respect the influence of Christianity was immense. In the early stages of its missionary activity, converts might be won from the populace, as they are still won at revivalist meetings, by rather crude appeals to their emotions, and especially to their fears, by threats of the wrath to come. But with the educated classes, and above all with the philosophers, a different note had to be struck. Here the early apologists at once occupied the common ground of monotheism, reinforcing the rudimentary rationalism of the Jews with the developed rationalism of the Greeks. Polytheism, and pagan superstition in general, were assailed with weapons borrowed from Cicero, who himself had borrowed them from the New Academy. The Stoic argument for the existence of a beneficient Creator, derived from the evidences of design found in natural objects, combined with the alleged innate idea of a God possessed by all men, was accepted as valid. In this way natural religion, considered as independent of and introductory to revealed religion, became an integral part of Christian apologetics, as, indeed, it had already been recognised in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Even the supernatural elements of prophecy and miracle received a rationalistic colouring. These were diverted from their original mystic significance as intensified manifestations of an ever present, ever active divine energy, to the coldly diplomatic function of credentials bestowed by the divine monarch on his extraordinary envoys for a specific purpose and for a limited period.[1] Won by these arguments, or, possibly, by more ethical and emotional appeals, a certain number of philosophers and advocates joined the Church, bringing with them the traditions of the lecture-hall and the court of justice. Under their manipulation religious belief became elaborated into a scientific theology, where every article was defined and demonstrated with a show of extreme logical precision, and, in general, with as much reason as could be expected from writers who were almost completely ignorant of reality, and whose conclusions were dictated to them beforehand by interest or passion.

In progress of time force took the place of persuasion as an

[1] This transformation is already very obvious in the Fourth Gospel, and marks its Hellenic character.

instrument of conversion; and the few remaining philosophers were compelled, like other Roman citizens, to profess at least an outward conformity with what was now the state religion. But some of them continued to cherish in secret the traditions of Hellenic thought, and kept alive its protest against the triumphant Orientalism of the established creed; while such education as still existed could not help using as its chief instrument a literature on which the stamp of reason remained indelibly impressed.

But while the reason of the Greeks imprinted its character on their forms of literary expression, it had more than a merely literary existence. Ionian speculation had begun with enquiries into the origin and constitution of the physical world, carried on in connexion with the study of geometry and arithmetic. Out of these the special sciences were subsequently evolved by the usual process of differentiation. We are accustomed to think of the scientific spirit as something modern, as alien to the habits of Greek thought, as dependent on the inductive method which the Greeks ignored. But this, as all scholars are coming to admit, is a mistake. Aristotle knew all about induction, even over-valuing its importance; and the methods of exact observation and experiment were abundantly exemplified in the Alexandrian Museum. The ancient physicists were, indeed, too dependent on mere observation; they had not learned the method, created by Galileo, of getting behind phenomena by means of mathematical analysis. Greek science stagnated, retrograded, and perished through no fault of its professors, but through the general decline of civilisation consequent on the ever-increasing pressure of barbarism within and without the frontiers of the Roman Empire. To speak more definitely, there was a continual growth of militarism involving aggravated financial burdens by which the material resources of the community were dried up, and simultaneously with this a rank growth of superstition by which its intellectual energies were undermined. Hence knowledge of the future was sought for through the study of astrology, and command over nature through the employment of familiar spirits.

This retrograde movement of the pagan or Graeco-Roman mind in its last age deserves careful attention, for the attitude

of Christianity towards physical science was determined by it during the Middle Ages. From her first foundation the Church had conceived the forces arrayed against her, in imagery borrowed from Persian mythology, as a vast army of dark spirits headed by the great apostate angel Satan, the author of all physical and moral evil on this earth. Such diseases as madness, epilepsy, and hysteria were caused by the presence of his emissaries in the human body, and were cured by the superior authority of agents commissioned by the power of good. The gods of polytheism were so many devils, and their worship an unholy conspiracy with the power of evil. We cannot, then, wonder that the new religion should have looked askance on studies which unfortunately had become associated with the prevalent demonology, nor that an abiding ecclesiastical prejudice should have survived from a conflict where science figured under the garb of an infernal magic exercised to the injury both of God and man.[1] If reason can be spoken of at all in such a connexion, there was less of its light with those who encouraged the popular superstition than with those who tried, however mistakenly, to trample out its manifestations. And in the conflict with astrology reason was entirely on the side of those who, like St. Augustine, pointed out the delusiveness and absurdity of its pretensions.[2] With the great Hellenic revival of after ages the tradition of Ionian thought reverted to its original purity; and on the removal of accidental ambiguities the opposing forces gradually grouped themselves according to their intrinsic affinities, science with reason, and Christianity with faith. But the inevitable conflict has been exasperated on the one side by a suspicion whose justification has been forgotten, and on the other by the memory of persecutions not wholly inexcusable under the conditions of mediaeval thought.

Conflicts, latent or overt, with the unreconciled inheritors of classical antiquity were not the only intellectual danger that Christianity had to face. In some respects Judaism offered a more formidable opposition to its claims. The mere existence

[1] In Cardinal Newman's 'Callista' Gurta the witch seems to symbolise physical science, while her son Juba stands for the spirit of modern liberalism.

[2] 'Confessiones,' IV., iii., 5.

of such a parent, surviving in indestructible vitality by the side of the daughter-religion, amounted to a continual and very provoking criticism on the pretensions of the Church. Authority, to command assent, must be ancient and undisputed. She might thank the Jews for it if hers was neither the one nor the other. Her advocates, indeed, talked of traditions going back to the creation of the world; but the claim was based on documents whose hereditary guardians utterly denied the legitimacy of the Christian interpretation. On their view such doctrines as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Virgin-birth, and the Atonement were utterly irreconcilable with the letter and spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures, being in fact an adulteration of pure monotheism with elements borrowed from heathen superstition. True, the prophets of Israel had foretold the coming of a Messiah, an anointed King of Davidic descent who was to redeem his people from their oppressors. But not a single incident in the career of Jesus answered to these predictions, least of all his death on the cross, a point on which modern scholars are now agreed. The destruction of their holy city was quoted against the Jews, as if it were a punishment for their hard-hearted unbelief. But it was really brought about by their faithful protest against Roman idolatry, a protest still steadfastly maintained against the more equivocal idolatry of that reformed Rome where the high pontiff of a new Paganism had set up his throne, in direct defiance of the Decalogue, over the worshipped bodies of dead men.

The popes, bishops, and kings of the early Middle Ages did themselves great honour by their toleration of a people whose opinion of Christianity was so unfavourable, and who took advantage of the freedom and security they enjoyed to express that opinion in no sparing language.[1] After the first Crusade this toleration was more or less withdrawn in deference to popular fanaticism associated with vindictive cupidity. But meanwhile the cause of monotheistic Puritanism had passed into the keeping of another Semitic people, whose horses' necks were clothed with the thunder of Sinai, and whose fierce

[1] Under Louis the Pious, the Jews 'could fearlessly give their candid opinion about Christianity, the miracles of the saints, the relics, and image-worship' (Graetz, 'History of the Jews,' Vol. III., p. 166, Engl. Transl.).

denunciation of 'those who give God partners' was carried home by the incisive rhetoric of Damascus and Toledo. We are apt to think of the great Mohammedan invasions as an offensive return of Asiatic barbarism, a southern pendant to the devastating descents of the Scandinavian pirates on north-western Europe. And so to a considerable extent they were. But for the doctors of the Church, Islam, when once rightly understood, meant very much more. It meant not only a force to be confronted by a crusading chivalry in the field, but also an array of philosophical principles, 'terrible as an army with banners,' to be met by counter-demonstrations in the study and the lecture-room. St. Louis observed that when a layman hears the Trinity denied, he should not reason with the infidel, but straightway run him through the body. Nevertheless, the pious monarch would have probably approved of the more peaceful means employed by St. Francis of Assisi to convert the Soldan; and we know how he at once commissioned three secretaries to take down the 'unanswerable argument,' which suddenly flashed across the mind of St. Thomas Aquinas at the royal dinner-table. Thus by a process already analysed the conflict of religious authorities resulted in the submission of the disputed questions to the arbitrament of reason. Nor at the very zenith of the so-called ages of faith were there wanting sceptics to declare without disguise that all three disputants, Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, were equally mistaken.

Reason at this time meant the philosophy of Aristotle. Geographical and historical circumstances had brought the Arabians into contact with Greek scholarship some centuries earlier than the theologians of Western Europe; and the Peripatetic system fell more easily into agreement with their own simple monotheism than with the complex subtleties of Catholic dogma. But the precocious application of reason to faith led to unexpected developments on both lines. In the schools of Bagdad and Cordova philosophy tended to become monism, and religion to evaporate into a mystical pantheism. Greek thought had always been approaching this consummation, but had never reached it, held back by the characteristic leaning of the Greek genius towards distinction, balance, and limitation. Formed under Roman influence, Neo-Platonism had nearly broken loose from these

fetters when the revived study of Aristotle came to rivet them more tightly than ever. And the new religions by which Hellenism was temporarily stifled proved in one way even more unfavourable to pantheism through their common insistence on human immortality, with all the tremendous practical interests that it involves. But the doctrine of divine omnipotence worked in an opposite sense. Seeming to be the literal apotheosis of personality, it ultimately annuls personality, for an infinite and absolute being cannot be conceived as self-conscious. To say there is no God but God comes very near to saying there is nothing but God; God, the world, and the human soul are not three, but one.

Some of the Arabian commentators on Aristotle actually took this step, reading their own theory into the text they professed to interpret. From their pages it passed through the mediation of Jewish translators into the schools of Christendom, where it met and mingled with an almost identical vein of speculation derived from Neo-Platonism under the influence of Christian mysticism. The earliest and most important of Western mediaeval pantheists was John Scotus Erigena.[1] That great thinker flourished in the ninth century, but his teaching did not bear full fruit until it was revived at the end of the twelfth century by David of Dinan and Amaury.[2] A papal decree compelled Amaury to retract; but the school which he represented had struck deep root, and soon reappeared under other forms. Above all, the Arabian philosophy generally associated with the great name of Averroes excited widespread attention, and won a ready entrance into the higher circles of mediaeval society, recommended as it was by the authority of Aristotle and of his most renowned interpreter. Even the Franciscan Order is said to have come under Averroist influence.[3] But the official exponents of scholastic Catholicism, with Aquinas at their head, showed without difficulty that the infidel commentators had misrepresented Aristotle's meaning; and popular art has depicted Averroes, together with sundry other heresiarchs,

[1] 'Restat sine ulla controversia, unum Deum omnia in omnibus esse fateri ('De Div. Nat.,' Lib. iii., cap. 17, p. 675, B. Migne).

[2] Haurćau, 'Histoire de la Philosophie Scolastique,' Vol. II., 1, Chapp. 4 and 5.

[3] Renan, 'Averroès,' p. 269.

lying prostrate under the feet of the Angelic Doctor on the frescoed wall of a Florentine chapel.

When the thirteenth century drew to its close the intellectual struggle between rival religious authorities seemed to have ceased, leaving Catholicism in possession of the field. The Jews were dispersed and ruined. The Moors were driven into a corner of Spain, and their schools of philosophy had long since expired under the fatal pressure of popular fanaticism. In the East Mohammedanism had become thoroughly rebarbarised by falling under Turkish control. Secure in the possession of its classic inheritance, Europe had nothing more to learn from the infidels nor the Church to fear from their doctors, whatever dangers their invading hordes might still hold in reserve. Nevertheless, the total result of scholasticism was to weaken traditional belief. It had set up Aristotle as the great master of all knowledge, and thereby forced attention on his discordance with orthodox theology. After all, it mattered practically nothing whether he was a pantheist or not, when his philosophy excluded everything in Christianity but its theism, and in theism everything but the personality of God. More particularly it excluded human immortality, the only religious doctrine to which, with its implications, any one in Europe except a few mystics attached any importance whatever. Had the schoolmen agreed among themselves, their authority might have counted for much; but their conclusions remained hopelessly at variance, nor was there any objective standard of reference to which they could appeal for verification, any such test, for instance, as the comparison of calculated results with observation in modern science.

If mediaeval faith found no lasting support in speculation, still less did it find a support in practice. The modern religious system of verification by conduct—what I have called ethical ophelism—was not one whose application was desirable in those times; for from Abélard to Dante[1] all the great writers of the Middle Ages are agreed in considering the morality of

[1] Abélard, 'Opera,' ed. Cousin, Vol. II., p. 409; John of Salisbury, 'Polycraticus,' III., ix., p. 493[b], Migne; Aquinas (?) 'De Regimine Principum,' III., 9; Roger Bacon, 'Compendium Theol.,' ed. Brewer, pp. 398 *sq.*; Dante, 'Inferno,' xxvi., 118 *sq.*; 'Convitto,' IV., v.

Greece and Rome as unquestionably superior to that of their own contemporaries. Enthusiasm for classical antiquity was indeed the inevitable outcome of the whole philosophic movement. Nor was it awakened only by the moral superiority of the heathens. Quite apart from this, they held the keys of that natural religion which had come to be recognised as the indispensable basis of Christianity, and he who sought to master it must begin by sitting at their feet.

But another and a newer interest was becoming associated with the study of Greek. At an early period in the history of Islam the attention of enlightened Orientals had been attracted by the mathematical, astronomical, geographical, and medical treatises composed in the great scientific schools of antiquity. Through the medium of Arabic and Latin translations these had found their way, together with Aristotle's writings, into the West, and had excited the liveliest curiosity to know more about a language and literature in which such treasures were preserved. To this curiosity our own Roger Bacon gave the most ardent and comprehensive expression. We habitually think of this ill-fated friar as a marvellous anachronism, as one who, in the second half of the thirteenth century, anticipated his own namesake, or, better still, anticipated Galileo by three hundred years—nay, almost looked forward to the mechanical triumphs of modern times. There was, perhaps, a touch of practical materialism about the Franciscan, as there was more than a touch of it about Lord Chancellor Bacon. But his true historical importance is not to be found in prophetic descriptions of the motor-car. It is to be found rather in his retrospective attitude, in the worship of classical antiquity shared by him with his noblest contemporaries. He was a harbinger of the real and redeeming Renaissance, the recovery not of the Greek beauty that ministered to voluptuousness, but of the Greek philosophy that ministered to truth and virtue.

The actual Renaissance was a far more complicated movement than anything that could be dreamed of in a monastic cell. It was less a single stream of tendency than a vast whirlpool where many opposing or intersecting currents met together, leaving the course of modern history to emerge at last

victorious from their tortuous eddies. Among these contributory forces one of the most important, but also one of the least calculable in its results, was mysticism. The conflict of authorities disclosed by Scholasticism set free a large amount of mystical aspiration. As it had not pleased God that the world should be saved by dialectic, personal devotion remained to be tried; and it was tried, with the usual anarchic results, appearing in one country as brooding pantheism, in another as the patient unresisting endurance of martyrdom for conscience' sake, in a third as organised and aggressive heresy, in a fourth as scholarly Platonism.

Plato, indeed, as represented on his more theological side, and as interpreted by Plotinus, was the master-thinker of the whole age, and of all ancient writers the most eagerly sought after by its students. If Greek exiles flying before the Turkish invaders had not come to Italy with his Dialogues in their hand, Italians would certainly have brought them from Constantinople, as Aristotle's treatises had been brought by the French crusaders to Paris two hundred and fifty years before.[1] Men and women long sought in the Phaedo for a rational assurance of that immortality which had been denied to them by the Peripatetic philosophy, or associated with degrading superstitions in the popular mythology. Still, by strengthening the very fulcrum of ecclesiastical authority, Platonism might so far seem to count as an element that made for reaction. But the real importance of the new teaching lay rather in its power to deliver men's intellects from the Aristotelian yoke, to promote the study of mathematics, to prepare the way for Copernicus and Galileo.

Philosophical dissensions may have played their part in the general break-up of the mediaeval organisation, but they are not solely responsible for it; and perhaps most of the anarchy and confusion so strongly characteristic of this period is traceable to purely material causes. During the two centuries that elapsed between the last crusade and the first great maritime enterprises of Portugal and Spain, questions of disputed succession and allegiance were agitated to an extent previously

[1] Jourdain, 'Recherches critiques sur les Traductions d'Aristote,' pp. 8 and 10.

unknown. Others besides the Bezonian had to answer the question, under which king? at the peril of their lives. Beginning at the two opposite extremities of Europe, in Naples and Scotland, the struggle for thrones spread like a pestilence over the length and breadth of Catholic Christendom, successively involving France, Spain, England, and Italy in devastating wars. In Germany dynastic dissensions had become permanent; nor was the tenure of crowns ever secure for many years together in the outlying Slavonic and Scandinavian kingdoms. Provinces and cities threw off the yoke of their ancient rulers; and the discontent of the plundered productive classes found expression in sanguinary insurrections. This loosening of traditional bonds opened a wide field for individual enterprise not only among the members of reigning houses, but through all classes of society. An exiled Florentine layman maps out the unseen world, seats himself on the throne of judgment, and distributes sentences of perdition and salvation at his own discretion. A visionary Sienese nun restores the Papacy to Rome. A visionary peasant girl restores France to her legitimate monarch. An English noble makes and unmakes kings. A Genoese sailor gives a new world to Castile. A Dominican friar holds for years the supremacy of Florence by the sole use of spiritual weapons.[1]

The production of great and powerful personalities went on during the succeeding centuries, and has indeed been continued, although on a less colossal scale, down to our own times. But it has tended to display itself more and more exclusively under the form of artistic genius, with a marked decrease of magnitude even there, while contributing more rarely to the consolidation of national states. That work of consolidation was formerly its chief function, and is also a most characteristic phenomenon of the Renaissance, with important bearings on the history of rationalism. The study of classical antiquity powerfully co-operated with the spontaneous working of natural causes, with the ambition of the few to extend their dominion and the

[1] The great and commanding personalities of the Middle Ages properly so called, from Charlemagne to Edward I. of England, would not, I think, have exercised any appreciable influence apart from the high official position to which they were raised by birth or election. The only exception I can think of is St. Bernard; and as Abbot of Clairvaux he held an official position of considerable dignity.

craving of the many for protection from violence and fraud, whether practised by predatory laymen or by predatory priests, to popularise the ideal of a strong national government. The city-states of Greece and Rome had set an example, recorded in two glorious literatures, of political organisations informed by a spirit of heroic patriotism, and worked for the common good on purely secular lines. Such at least was the dream of thinkers like Machiavelli; and the quickening power of the dream did not depend on its strict historical accuracy. In one point at least they were right. The classic state was supreme in matters of religion, and never tolerated the dictation of native or foreign hierarchs. It was now proposed that the civil power in the modern state should exercise a similar jurisdiction over the public worship of its subjects, and over the religious teaching to which that worship gave expression. Opinion was still made subject to authority; but the seat of authority was changed from a spiritual to a secular power.

Modern Liberalism energetically repudiates the State's claim to interfere with what has been rather infelicitously called freedom of conscience; and modern Catholicism has not been slow to utilise a popular cry, with which, however, it associates a meaning widely different from the liberal interpretation of freedom. The reciprocity is to be all on one side. Everybody is to tolerate the Church, and the Church is to tolerate nobody. The State is to protect Roman teaching in religion and morals against inconvenient criticism, but not to enforce any dogmas of its own. A long name, Caesaropapism, has been coined to stigmatise such a competing claim where it is still put forward.

On the abstract question a rationalist will side with neither party. In his opinion force is no remedy against error. Experience shows that in scientific enquiries truth results from the freest and fullest exercise of criticism. Even in mathematics the right of private judgment must be admitted; and the most old-fashioned geometrician would laugh at the absurdity of limiting space to three dimensions by legal enactment. But as between two illegitimate exercises of power, it is quite possible and quite consistent for rationalists to prefer the authority of the State to the authority of an international Church. Political magistrates are not as a rule a set of fanatics, caring only to force

their private opinions down the throats of an unwilling people. To govern at all they must have a considerable following; and their interests are more likely to be identified with those of their countrymen than are the interests of a spiritual power having its seat in a foreign city and chiefly recruited from an alien race.

Such considerations always count for much; they were of overwhelming weight in securing the support of public opinion for the machinery by which the Reformation was carried through. The statesmen of the sixteenth century had to protect the nations under their charge against the exactions of a shameless and licentious Italian priesthood, and the royal succession against the interference of a pontiff whose decisions might be dictated by his own political interests as a temporal sovereign. For this purpose it was necessary that they should forcibly suppress just as many dogmas—dogmas, be it remembered, formerly imposed by the same force—as favoured those intolerable pretensions. A century before Luther, Bishop Pecok had upheld his Church's teaching against the Lollards on the ground of its utility.[1] It now appeared how little that argument was worth. The doctrine of Purgatory could hardly be recommended as a means of moral discipline when it had become not merely the great instrument of rapine, but of rapine used for the support of unspeakable vice.

Whatever may be thought about the claims of authority in matters of opinion, it would be worse than useless to ignore the decisive part played by it in the ultimate determination of religious belief. The present division of Western Europe between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism is not due to any racial characteristics of the peoples professing their respective creeds. The key must rather be sought in their political geography. While the Roman empire of the West retained its earlier organisation, conversions to Christianity were effected by private enterprise or by the natural spread of example. But with the victory of the Barbarians and the assumption of a predominant position by the Roman See a different system came into play. Missionaries were regularly dispatched from headquarters with a commission from the Pope as the official head of Christendom to bring the heathen under

[1] For Pecok's opinions, which are not in the true sense rationalistic, see Thorold Rogers, 'Six Centuries of Work and Wages,' p. 378.

his spiritual dominion; for this purpose they addressed themselves in the first instance to the temporal rulers of the still unconverted Teutons; and when these had been won over, their authority was freely used to impose baptism on their willing or unwilling subjects. Thus it came to pass that throughout Northern Europe temporal sovereigns found themselves invested with a sort of spiritual power unknown to the princes of the Latin states; while at the same time the greater barbarism, and perhaps the greater seriousness of the Teutons, rendered them an easier prey to Roman greed and imposture until the awakening of the Renaissance brought about an overwhelming popular reaction.

But the Reformation involved much more than a revolt against priestly exactions followed by a transference of authority in matters of religious belief from the Church to the State. It stood for a great religious revival, in which the sporadic mystical movements of the two preceding centuries were clarified, systematised, and united under a common standard. That standard was the Bible. Here we see the spirit of the New Learning manifestly at work. As the classics of profane philosophy and literature were drawn out of their hiding places, cleansed from the dust of ages, retranslated and made universally accessible by the printing press, so also were the classics of sacred literature and sacred philosophy republished to Europe, but with a wider diffusion and a more rousing appeal. Nor let it be forgotten as vitally characteristic of the movement that what German scholarship gave back to mankind was the whole Bible—not merely the New Testament, but the Old. Reformers might talk, and not without reason, of gospel-truth, of a return to the purity of early Christianity. But so far they were adding nothing to what had been tried over and over again in the Middle Ages, within the Church by St. Francis of Assisi, without the Church by Waldensians, Lollards, and others, and never tried with permanent success. For a return to the early Christian ideal really meant asceticism, communism, blind reliance on supernatural assistance against the powers of darkness, that is, against the world.[1] Such an ideal could not co-exist with the conditions even of mediaeval

[1] See Ritschl, 'Geschichte des Pietismus,' Vol. I., i., 2.

civilisation, and therefore its devotees were either shut up in convents or rooted out with fire and sword. Now, the lessons of the Old Testament, the stern practical realism of Hebrew religion, were just what was wanted to correct the extravagances of mediaeval heresy, to replace the ascetic ideal of righteousness, to rehabilitate the arm of the flesh, and to use it for the suppression of idolatrous polytheism. That union of Church and State which the Hellenist associated with the memories of his beloved republics the Hebraist saw realised under a holier commission at Shiloh and Jerusalem; and the great Puritan poet represented both traditions when he spoke in chanted prose of weapons forged in the shop of war by armed justice in defence of beleaguered truth.

Finally, all these impulses were gathered up and welded together by the rich and powerful personality of one in whom the unrestrained individualism of centuries reached its climax and its most consummate fruit. Nor did the fertility of that tremendous upheaval exhaust itself in Luther. To carry the Reformation through, and to secure its conquests against the subsequent reaction, nothing less was needed than the array of heroes who seconded him—Zwingli, Calvin, John Knox, Elizabeth, William the Silent, Gustavus, Cromwell, and last of all, but not inferior to any of these in nobility, William the Deliverer.

That the Reformation was not directly favourable to liberty of thought has become a commonplace; but that it was on the whole, as so many now hold, an event to be regretted by rationalists and friends of enlightenment generally cannot be admitted. Indeed, the very mistake of describing Protestantism as a revolt of reason against superstition, or of private judgment against authority, is highly suggestive. Such a misconception would never have arisen had not reason and freedom been somehow related as antecedents or consequents, or both the one and the other, to the religious movement represented by Luther. We are told that the historical connexion is only apparent, that the emancipating process was begun and completed by the Renaissance, would indeed have been completed much sooner had not a recrudescence of fanaticism provoked by the theological controversy come to interrupt its normal evolution. But is it so certain that the Renaissance would

have been tolerated much longer had the Reformation not intervened? There are reasons for believing the contrary. A very similar movement in the Mohammedan world had been arrested by popular fanaticism centuries before.[1] Centuries afterwards English rationalism succumbed before a like reaction, and was only resuscitated by the importation of Scottish and Continental thought. The Church's attitude toward physical science was traditionally hostile; and under the manipulation of Aquinas her creed had become interwoven with the false astronomy of Aristotle, whose authority, at any rate, the Reformers helped to overthrow.

What may fairly be said is that various Protestant Churches have frequently displayed a spirit of ferocious intolerance which would have done them more discredit than is their actual due had it been less consistent with their original principles. But in point of fact the Reformers did not take their stand on the right of free opinion. What they objected to, as Froude has well observed, was not persecution as such, but persecution of the truth. At the same time the commonplace taunt that they merely substituted one infallible authority for another is hardly justified. Their belief in Scriptural infallibility was fully shared by their opponents; and the Roman Church now stands far more deeply committed to that doctrine than any important Protestant community.[2] Even early in the seventeenth century, when the Copernican system had won general acceptance in Northern Europe,[3] it was condemned by Rome ostensibly on account of its inconsistency with the letter of Scripture, although the real reason was more probably its incompatibility with Aristotelian scholasticism. Nor is the position altered by the fact—if it be a fact—that the Higher Criticism first arose in Roman Catholic circles. A more significant circumstance is that on that occasion it was promptly suppressed by the Roman Catholic authorities.[4]

[1] Renan, 'Averroès,' pp. 29–36.

[2] See Cardinal Manning on the Inspiration of Scripture in 'Essays on Religion and Literature,' Second Series, pp. 348–385.

[3] In his ironical address to 'the discreet reader,' Galileo affects to have undertaken his exposition of the Copernican system to show that the Italians are not so ignorant of astronomy as their critics beyond the Alps imagine ('Dialoghi sui Massimi Sistemi,' p. 3).

[4] There is a picturesque account of the way in which Bossuet suppressed

All this, however, merely amounts to claiming that the bonds imposed by the Reformed Churches were more easily broken or slipped through than the bonds imposed by Rome; nor is it intended to claim any more. Rationalism alone has established freedom of utterance about religion among us—freedom of thought has always existed for free souls—and the pretension of modern orthodox Protestants to have introduced toleration is as ridiculous as their taunting references to the persecuting spirit of Catholicism are unjust and odious. That they profess to represent primitive Christianity, and that primitive Christianity virtually condemned persecution, proves nothing. For in the first place Rome vindicates the same representative position for herself, and in the next place, to be consistent, they should condemn the use of force for any purpose whatever, which, with the honourable exception of the Quakers, they would be very sorry to do.

Opportunism is in truth the common guide of both parties in matters of religious toleration. Two instances may be quoted in illustration of what is meant. A certain Friar Forest was burned alive in May, 1538, for the 'heresy' of asserting that the Pope was head of the Church. On that occasion Latimer consented to preach a sermon, the object of which was to induce the victim to recant his convictions.[1] Seventeen years later, on the day after Hooper's martyrdom, Philip of Spain, whose name was to become inseparably associated with *autos da fe*, put up his confessor to preach a sermon denouncing the execution as contrary to the true spirit of Christianity; the King's object at that time being to make himself popular among Englishmen, and to avoid all responsibility for the cruelties of his sanguinary consort.[2] These are extreme and isolated instances of self-protective mimicry in the predatory traditionalist. No Papist has, I believe, been again burned for heresy in England; and the courtly confessor was presumably not invited to repeat his sermon at Madrid. The perfect realisation of a type is necessarily a rare occurrence. But one such case is of inestimable value for the light it

Richard Simon's 'Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament' in Renan's Preface to the French translation of Kuenen (1866).

[1] Froude's 'History of England,' Vol. V., p. 497 (Cabinet ed.).

[2] Strype's 'Memorials,' Vol. III., p. 209, quoted by Prescott, 'Philip the Second,' Vol. I., p. 105.

throws on the imperfectly developed specimens of common experience. And here in these two episodes of religious history we have the double aspect of the gospel of unreason brought out with an ingenuousness of self-revelation that is unique. There is no violence that pious fanaticism will not practice to enforce conformity. There is no gentleness it will not simulate to disarm suspicion.

What the Reformation did for intellectual freedom, and therefore eventually for rationalism, was to overcome traditionalism as an element of religious belief by setting the principle of authority at variance with itself. In Germany and England the national state was opposed to the Church. In other countries Presbyterianism was opposed to Episcopacy. The result was a state of things somewhat resembling the great religious conflicts of the Middle Ages, but with a tension more violent in proportion to the more restricted arena and the more intimate relations between the warring creeds. Again reason was invoked by all parties, again a common ground of argument was sought, and again litigation redounded to the profit of the arbiter to whom all appealed.

But the first effect of the collision was to generate an amount of heat most unfavourable to the growth of rationalism. Erasmus and More furnish striking examples of the reaction brought about in sensitive minds by the panic-dread of revolution. How far Erasmus had gone in the direction of unbelief is not known; but it would hardly be uncharitable to conjecture that his intellectual sympathies were with Cicero rather than with St. Paul. But after Luther's outbreak his submission to ecclesiastical authority would, in its grotesque abjectness, have won a smile from his own goddess of Folly. With Sir Thomas More there is less room for doubt, and the revulsion of sentiment is not ridiculous, but tragic. After laying down the most admirable principles of religious toleration in his ideal commonwealth, he became one of the cruellest persecutors of a cruel age; and, what was worse, the heretics whom he sent to the stake were much less heretical than their judge. The author of the 'Utopia' was, in fact, an agnostic. Among the inhabitants of that ideal community 'there be,' he tells us, 'that give worship to a man that was once of excellent virtue or of famous glory,

not only as God, but also as the chiefest and highest God. But the most and the wisest part, rejecting all these, believe that there is a certain godly power unknown, far above the capacity and reach of man's wit, dispersed throughout all the world, not in bigness, but in virtue and power. Him they call the Father of all. To Him alone they attribute the beginnings, the increasings, the proceedings, the changes and the ends of all things. Neither give they divine honours to any other than him.' 'So far,' observes Jowett, after quoting this passage, 'was More from sharing the popular religious beliefs of his time.'[1] And so mistaken, we may add, was Macaulay in resting the permanent credibility of transubstantiation on the faith of such a believer. The point is one on which Jowett is not likely to have been deceived, for, apart from his general ability as an interpreter of other men's thoughts, his own official position had accustomed him to combine the same profession of orthodoxy with the same scarcely veiled unbelief.

The Reformation was followed in hardly more than a quarter of a century by the publication of the Copernican system. The bearing of that great discovery on Christian theology has been variously estimated. To some it involves the complete overthrow of revealed religion. To others it is just as reconcilable with orthodoxy as is the Ptolemaic astronomy. In discussing the issue we must guard against a confusion between psychology and logic. It is quite possible for two beliefs to be simultaneously held by the great majority of educated persons which, in the judgment of the most careful thinkers, are mutually exclusive. It is not, therefore, enough to say that during some centuries vast numbers of people, otherwise competent to form an opinion, have accepted the Copernican system, and have yet remained Christians. At most a slight presumption that the two beliefs are not incompatible may be admitted. And it may fairly be contended that a religion which has remained so long practically unshaken by the revolution in astronomy is not likely to be disturbed by it in the centuries to come. At the same time it should be borne in mind that a consideration which, taken alone, has little effect, when combined with other

[1] 'The Dialogues of Plato,' Vol. III., p. 189. The passage quoted from More will be found in the 'Utopia,' Temple Classics edition, p. 138.

considerations, may help to make up a cumulative argument of overwhelming strength. Many thoughtful persons have become convinced in our own day that the scientific theory of the world is on the whole incompatible with the Christian theory. And it can hardly be doubted that modern astronomy has had a share in determining their point of view.

So much being premised, we may now try to ascertain what has been the actual effect produced by the Copernican system on religious thought. I must begin by clearing away a current misconception. People sometimes talk as if there were something flattering to human pride in the belief that the earth is the centre of the universe, and something humiliating in the discovery that our dwelling-place is only one among several planets, some of them vastly superior to it in size, all revolving about the sun, which again is only one, and by no means the largest or brightest, among a countless multitude of starry spheres, each of them probably surrounded by a troop of companions inaccessible to our means of vision. Whether there are, or ever have been, persons who have experienced this painful and, let us hope, salutary revulsion of feeling on becoming acquainted with the realities of their cosmic position, is more than I can tell. Personally, I know nothing about it, nor can I comprehend how such relative emotions as self-exaltation and self-abasement, being as they are determined by a comparison of ourselves as individuals with one another, can have any place whatever in the absolute self-consciousness of human beings as such. But one thing I do know, and that is that the sentiments of Aristotle and Dante, of Giordano Bruno and Galileo, in other words, of the most illustrious exponents of the two opposing systems, were exactly the reverse of those popularly attributed to the upholders and impugners of the geocentric theory. So far from being the place of honour, the centre counted as the most degraded part, the sink of the universe.[1] To Dante it is the lowest pit of damnation, the eternal residence of Satan and of his most reprobate victims. Earth as the vilest element ever tends towards the centre, fire as the noblest element tends

[1] It was actually made an objection to Copernicus that his system placed such a vile body as the earth, composed of the very dregs of matter, between two such pure and noble bodies as Venus and Mars (Galilei, 'Dialoghi,' p. 274). Galileo himself pronounces a glowing panegyric on the earth (*Op. cit.*, pp. 59 60).

towards the circumference. The sphere enclosed by the moon's orbit is a theatre of generation and corruption, where all the vicissitudes of fortune are exhibited—a notion still embalmed in the phrase 'this sublunary world.' Beyond it extends in rising gradations of glory the world of unbroken and everlasting felicity, beyond which there is nothing but God, the prime mover of all.

Let us then bear in mind that what Copernicus and his successors primarily did was to abolish this radical distinction between heaven and earth as applied to the visible world, and to suggest the idea of a thorough-going unity of composition in the material universe. Assimilation is the great method of reason; and therefore the result told to that extent in favour of rationalism. A more direct consequence was that the revolution in astronomy brought about a revolution in physics which threatened the very foundation of scholastic theology. In the geocentric system bodies were conceived as having a natural tendency to rest, and as being kept in motion solely by the revolution of the celestial spheres, which again owe their unceasing activity to the presence of a spiritual principle, a beloved object whose eternity impels them to an imitation of itself.[1] The theory is essentially animistic, and was elaborated by Aristotle in avowed adhesion to the old Ionian mythology. From Aristotle it passed to Aquinas, whose demonstration of the existence of God is full of references to his master's 'Physics.'[2] But the conception of the planets as bodies perpetually rotating on their own axes and at the same time revolving freely round the sun necessitated a complete reconsideration of the laws of motion, a reconsideration which led to the brilliant discoveries of Galileo in mechanics, followed up and perfected by those of Newton. Other arguments for the existence of God might be forthcoming; but the old argument that nature could not go on moving without the help of an omnipotent spirit was no longer available.

Probably the Roman Inquisitors were shrewd enough to appreciate the bearing of the theories, set forth with such lucidity and charm in Galileo's Dialogues, on the logic of the great mediaeval Dominican. But the Reformation had lifted

[1] 'L'amor che muove il cielo e le altre stelle' (Dante).

[2] S. Thomae Aquin., 'Summa contra Gentiles,' Lib. I., cap. xiii.

the Bible into a position of such unique authority that an appeal to the letter of Scriptural texts seemed for the moment the most politic course. Modern controversies have accustomed us to look on such tactics as dangerous. But in this instance they were merely dilatory, futile, and vexatious. Galileo was a very orthodox Catholic; and in trying to prove that his astronomy could be reconciled with the Bible he showed himself a better theologian than his judges.[1] Assuming the fact of a divine revelation involving occasional references to common phenomena, to describe those phenomena in any but the popular phraseology of the time would have been useless or mischievous pedantry. The threadbare modern plea that the Bible was not intended to teach science is eminently applicable to every passage where the earth's immobility seems to be affirmed. Elsewhere the Bible, unfortunately for its infallibility, does mean to teach science, and teaches it wrong.

A far more serious issue was disclosed by another result of the Copernican astronomy. It suggested the possibility that ours was not the only world inhabited by rational beings with souls to be lost or saved. The schoolmen looked on the heavenly bodies as the dwelling-places of glorified spirits. But when our earth had come to be regarded as a planet, and the planets, by parity of reasoning, as so many earths, such an assignment seemed childishly absurd. At the same time the conviction that such enormous masses of matter must have been created for some good purpose remained axiomatic. That our globe and everything in it existed solely for the sake of man could still be plausibly maintained; but that such was also the purpose subserved by Jupiter and Saturn seemed unlikely, to say the least of it; and the unlikelihood increased with every fresh revelation of the telescope until it grew to absolute impossibility. It was just barely conceivable that Jupiter's moons were created to enable us to discover the velocity of light or to ascertain the longitude at sea; but Saturn's moons are not required for either purpose, still less those of Uranus and Neptune; while their possible utility in lighting those distant orbs by night leaps to the eyes. Similarly it seemed as if the so-called fixed stars could have been created for no

[1] As is now admitted by the Jesuit Father Brucker (quoted by Prof. Morando in his very learned defence of Rosmini, p. lxxv.).

worthier end than to form centres of light, heat, and gravity for attendant trains of planets, which again could fulfil their only rational destination as habitations for beings like ourselves.

All such reasoning assumes for its basis the axiom that everything exists for a purpose. It is an integral part of that 'natural religion' on which Christianity rests, and is generally accepted by Christians without demur as self-evident. Yet the difficulties in which orthodox Christianity is involved by the admission of a plurality of worlds are tremendous. That God should become incarnate, suffer, and die for one world already involves a severe strain on the capacity for belief. But that millions on millions of worlds, otherwise constituted like our own, should not need a redeemer, or should remain unredeemed, or be redeemed by a process demanding so many repetitions of what has hitherto always been described as unique—are alternatives one more unacceptable than another. There remains, indeed, the outlet of supposing the sacrifice consummated on Calvary to have been supernaturally communicated to all the worlds standing in need of faith in its expiatory virtue. But no one with a single spark of Christian feeling could possibly think of a Sirian sinner turned to repentance by the mechanism of such a cold-blooded intercosmic propaganda. There is indeed one sect of Christians—hardly allowed the name by the other sects—whose faith has nothing to fear from a possible plurality of worlds. Unitarians can admit without inconsistency that every world, needing or not needing redemption, may have witnessed the revelation of God in a perfect man, that, to use the words of an illustrious living poetess, a Christ may have died, though not, as she adds, 'in vain' on all the stars. And perhaps Unitarianism owes the adhesion of some great minds in the past and its continued vitality at the present moment to this happy adaptability of constitution. But that immense majority of believers who cherish the doctrine of the Incarnation in its highest form must be content to plead that no abstract possibilities, however perplexing, can turn the scale against the certainties of revealed truth; adding, perhaps, with a sad smile, that the awful realities of evil in this one world present difficulties more pressing than any number of problematic Saturnians or Sirians.

For many years past the question of the plurality of worlds,

considered as a theological interest, has receded into the background of speculation, and has been replaced by biological and historical problems more amenable to the methods of induction. It is difficult to realise that less than half a century ago the subject was debated with acrimony between two eminent men of science, both of them orthodox believers, and that it frequently supplied a topic for drawing-room conversation, then perhaps more serious and intellectual than it is now. Possibly, however, some readers may wish to know what the more disinterested science of the present day has to say about the controversy, and what light, if any, has been thrown on it by the doctrine of evolution.

The subject has recently been revived and treated with great fulness of knowledge by Mr. A. R. Wallace,[1] co-discoverer with Darwin of natural selection. His conclusion is identical with Whewell's, although not inspired by the same religious interest. That is to say, he peremptorily denies that there is any evidence for the existence of such beings as man outside this planet, and urges very ingeniously that the conditions essential to the evolution of a rational creature have not been combined elsewhere. Mr. Wallace's familiarity with biology and physiography enable him to speak with authority on those conditions, their almost incalculable number and complexity, and the enormous length of time—possibly over a hundred million years—through which they must have acted without interruption for the achievement of this momentous result. It seems made out that no other member of the solar system presents, or has ever presented, or ever will present, just that happy coincidence, still less maintained it so long undisturbed; while the limitations of the stellar universe, and the constitution, so far as known, of other stars, reduce the possibility of its having been realised elsewhere to a vanishing quantity.

More than one astronomer has expressed his dissent from Mr. Wallace's conclusion. But assuming the eminent naturalist to have made out his case on the data assumed, Catholic theology can derive no advantage from it. For the assumption that a reasonable being like man can only have been evolved under certain physical conditions plainly excludes the exercise of an omnipotent and intelligent will. In other words, it removes a

[1] 'Man's Place in the Universe,' by A. R. Wallace. Fourth edition, 1904.

single objection to orthodox Christianity by sacrificing that basis of natural theism without which orthodoxy would cease to exist.

Returning from this digression to the discussion in its wider bearings of sixteenth-century speculation as affected by the Copernican astronomy, we find ourselves confronted by the great figure of Giordano Bruno, the martyr-philosopher of the scientific Renaissance. An older contemporary of Galileo, and, like him, an enthusiastic adherent of the heliocentric system, Bruno was not, like his more illustrious countryman, led forward into the paths of physical enquiry under the guidance of rigorous mathematical methods, but rather led back to those earlier Ionian speculations so long kept out of sight by the supremacy of Aristotle, and pressing for reconsideration, now that Aristotle was overthrown. Infinite space had been a postulate of early Greek thought, and had even lingered on among an isolated group in the cosmogony of Epicurus, but had been rejected by Aristotle, with whose idea of a finite spherical universe it seemed incompatible, and after the triumph of scholastic Catholicism had come to be looked on as savouring of heresy. But the whole situation was revolutionised by Copernicus. The celestial luminaries were no longer conceived as carried on a series of concentric shells, but as moving freely through space; and with the shattering of those crystalline spheres an outlook opened into the vast solitudes which lay beyond; while the forces imprisoned within their impassable walls as it were exploded, and rushed out to occupy the illimitable void. Under Aristotle's system the position assigned to matter had been something like that of the populace in an aristocratically governed Greek city-state, fit only to receive the orders and to carry out the designs of an enlightened ruling caste, or of the structureless mass on which the thoughts of plastic art are impressed. To Bruno, on the contrary, matter seemed more a power than a potentiality; an infinite and eternal energy, whence the living forms of visible nature were thrown up in inexhaustible profusion, and into whose bosom they were absorbed again. In his philosophy the subterranean current of mediaeval pantheism gushed up once more into the light of day, mingling its waters with the reopened springs of

Platonism and with the passionate outpourings of Lucretius, which seemed less justified by the memory of what evils sacerdotal superstition had already wrought than by a prophetic vision of the woes it was yet to work. Not that Bruno was, what Lucretius had been, an uncompromising materialist of the Epicurean school. Twelve centuries of spiritualist teaching were not lightly to be forgotten, least of all when the new Greek scholarship was giving men access to the classic arguments of spiritualism in their first dramatic presentation by Plato, and in their triumphant completion by Plotinus. But the foundation of Epicurean materialism, that marvellous atomic theory which explained so much already and was to explain so much more when reorganised and reapplied by modern science, could neither be discarded nor suffered to coexist in unreconciled opposition with the idea of inextended souls as the eternal centres of life and consciousness. In this dilemma the mysterious significance assigned by Plato himself to arithmetical units suggested a link between the two; and Bruno rose to the higher synthesis of a theory in which animated monads, emanating in some undefined way from a supreme monad, were conceived with equal indefiniteness as the absolute reality of things.

Bruno's life shows the high-water mark of the classical Renaissance in its revolt against mediaeval Christianity, as his death dates the first signal manifestation of the theological reaction that succeeded it. But classical antiquity had still weapons in reserve, wherewith to arm rationalism in the coming struggle. Of these the most insidious was the old doctrine of natural religion. It will be remembered how Greek philosophy, working on a comparative survey of all the mythologies then known, had arrived at the conception of a supreme deity, source and sanction of the moral law, and instinctively recognised as such by all mankind; how this conception had passed into Christian teaching with St. Paul; and how it had furnished the early apologists with a common ground on which they could approach their pagan adversaries. Through the Middle Ages it had offered a similar basis of agreement in the controversies with Judaism and Islam; but Abélard already betrays a marked tendency to develop the basis at the expense

of the superstructure; and probably his way of thinking was shared by many for whom the pantheistic interpretation of nature seemed too paradoxical or too confused. And the time had now arrived when natural theism was to become more openly dissociated from the denominational creeds. The religious wars and persecutions of the sixteenth century, the complete recovery of classical antiquity, the revelation of a new world entirely given up to heathenism, the fresh prominence given to Mohammedanism by the rapid advance of the Ottoman power, must have led the most cultivated minds to ask themselves once more whether the true essence of religion did not lie in the great principles on which all were agreed. While the war of creeds was raging their voices were not raised or were overborne, but at the first lull one of them seized the opportunity to frame a message of peace and good-will.

Early in the seventeenth century this favourable moment occurred. In France the Edict of Nantes seemed to have definitely closed the period of religious wars. In England the accession of James I. combined the causes of legitimacy and Protestantism, and after the failure of the insane Gunpowder Plot Rome ceased to molest the government, not without hopes of converting the reigning family by peaceful means; while the feeble remnant of Roman Catholics secured a certain measure of toleration by paying a not very onerous tribute to the impecunious monarch. Freedom of worship was granted to the Protestants in the hereditary dominions of the House of Austria by Matthias, who on his election to the Empire tried to extend the same policy to the whole of Germany. In the Low Countries a twelve years' truce between Spain and the United Provinces practically admitted that the Dutch had made good their claim to independence.

It was during these halcyon days that a young English cavalier, Sir Edward Herbert, better known by his later title as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, planned and partly composed a work described as the charter of English Deism, the famous treatise 'De Veritate.' Herbert's analysis of the principles of knowledge is both cumbersome and confused, and possesses no other value than what belongs to it as the first independent

effort made by any Englishman in that direction. But the real interest of the book lies in its antiquity, so to speak, rather than in its modernity, in its frank presentation of a natural theism like that of Cicero as the only rational and genuine religion. The existence of God as the sanction here and hereafter of a virtuous life, and the expiation of sin by repentance—these, detailed in a creed of five articles, are, according to Herbert, the essential points. Their truth is guaranteed by intuition and verified by the universal agreement of mankind. They constitute the real Catholicism, the truly infallible Church, not built of marble, nor made up from the writings or words or suffrages of men, which does not fight under any particular flag, nor is it shut up within any geographical or chronological limits; but outside it there is no salvation.[1] All else has been added by priests for their own selfish purposes. Another work devoted to the examination of heathen rites and ceremonies makes this clear, while heathen philosophy shows a perfect acquaintance with the five articles of true religion. And if Herbert does not say it in so many words, he hints clearly enough that the superfluous dogmas of Christianity have no other origin than priestcraft.

Lord Herbert can only be called a rationalist in a very restricted and relative sense. His ethical theism, like that of the ancient philosophers whence he avowedly borrowed it, is the residuum left after eliminating the mutual inconsistencies of the traditional creeds, touched with a peculiar mysticism shared by him with his more celebrated brother, George Herbert, author of the 'Temple.' His rationalism—what there is of it—lies in the implied criticism of Christianity as a supernatural revelation. No such communication would be needed to inform the world of what its best and wisest knew already, what all men felt more or less unconsciously to be true.[2] And the attempt to pass current as revealed truth what all enlightened persons would promptly reject were it found in a heathen author betrays the handiwork of a designing priesthood. The argument has remained popular, and now and then

[1] 'De Veritate,' p. 221. The first English edition of this work has the imprimatur of William Haywood, Laud's private chaplain.

[2] This is brought out more distinctly in his posthumous works 'De Religione Gentilium,' and the 'Dialogue between a Tutor and his Pupil.'

it occurs independently to young people with a turn for rapid generalisation.

As characteristically English traits in this freethinking Cavalier may be mentioned an inborn genius for compromise, a taste for the colourless undenominationalism, so dear after all to the lay English intellect, a great theoretical regard for morality—his rather unprincipled conduct in real life inclines me to call it cant—and more intellectual courage than could be found at least then on the Continent. Many years earlier Jean Bodin, amid the fierce conflicts of Catholic and Huguenot, had cherished the same longing for a return to the restfulness of the religion of nature; but he kept his preferences in manuscript. Somewhat later Charron spoke as if no religion had any basis in reason, and as if a man's faith depended entirely on the place of his birth; but his scepticism did not prevent him from securing high ecclesiastical preferment, leaving the question whether he was an atheist or an orthodox Catholic to be disputed by critics down to the present day. Lord Herbert practised a slight reticence in the publication of his opinions, but there never has been the least doubt as to what they were.

The 'De Veritate' did not appear until the psychological moment for a reissue of natural religion had already passed, for the Thirty Years' War was then raging; and the publication of Herbert's 'De Causis Errorum' was even worse timed, for it fell in the thick of the civil war between Puritanism and the Anglican Church. Those halcyon days of his youth had been the lull before the storm. The enlightened age of Elizabeth and Henri IV., of Montaigne and Bodin, of Shakespeare and Bacon—may we not add of Cervantes?—was followed by a long period of violent reaction, culminating in the successful attempt of Louis XIV. to exterminate Protestantism in France, and the unsuccessful attempt of his Stuart vassal to re-establish Romanism in England. The two great religious movements that divided Europe between them created an atmosphere of passionate piety, whose influence has deeply coloured the intellectual products of the period. And the explanation of this extraordinary phenomenon is not far to seek. For not only did each of the two great rival faiths receive fresh energy from contact and collision with its neighbour, but each severally

saw the general conflict reflected and repeated within its own bosom, and was thereby stimulated to the highest possible development of its intrinsic capabilities. Of the well-known variations of Protestantism no more need be said than that there is a singular infelicity, at least on the part of Catholic controversialists, in using them as an argument against the fundamental principle of the Reformation. For in the first place a tendency to variation is a sign rather of health and strength than of weakness and disease in religion as in living species. And in the next place the variations accused were due in no small degree to the incomplete victory of the Reformation and the necessity of conciliating half-hearted adherents or reluctant converts by a series of compromises and concessions which the more advanced spirits indignantly repudiated; while others again, such as the different forms of pietism, sprang up in imitation of the Monastic Orders, and served to gratify the same morbid passion for devotional excitement. Anyhow—and this is the important point to notice—variation, whether a discreditable symptom or the reverse, was not confined to the Reformed communities; for the old Church received a large Protestant element into its fold under the names of Jansenism and Molinism, movements finally suppressed as heretical, but conducive in their time to manifestations of religious genius which have since been made the boast of the organisation by which their authors were repudiated.

The literature of that age has remained sharply distinguished from that which went before and from that which came after it by its profoundly religious character. In this connexion it will suffice to quote such well-known names as Milton and Bunyan for England, Corneille Pascal and Racine for France, and Calderon for Spain; but the list might be considerably extended were we to take in the names of the great pulpit orators whose sermons have survived as literature in France and England. What is still more remarkable, we find the great leaders in science and philosophy combined, Descartes and Leibniz, Boyle, Barrow and Newton, contributing to the defence of theology.

I have mentioned Descartes among the theologians. Such a classification does not exactly harmonise with the great part assigned to him by some historians in the emancipation of

human reason, and therefore indirectly in the constitution of rationalism; nor indeed is their general estimate of the French thinker one in which I can agree. The author of the 'Discourse on Method' was assuredly a great mathematician, and the rules that he lays down for the acquisition of knowledge are avowedly generalised from the procedure of geometry. They are excellent rules in the abstract; but, as is the case with all maxims, much more depends on their application than on their principle. Descartes begins by resolving never to admit anything as true that he does not certainly know to be so, or, as he proceeds to explain, that is not self-evident. Now, that is a safe enough rule where geometrical demonstrations are concerned, because the senses are always there to guarantee us against false assumptions. But when we pass from the experience of simple space-relations to questions about the origin and constitution of things, the self-evident certainties of any particular individual, however intelligent, are apt to be the assumptions that harmonise best with his old habits and prejudices. That Descartes, at any rate, had such prejudices, he took no pains to conceal, informing us at the very outset that as a first application of his method he resolved to conform to the customs of his country, receiving as true the religion—Roman Catholicism—in which he had been brought up.[1] And how little irony was implied by this ingenuous confession plainly appears from the marvellous string of fallacies subsequently laid before us as the chain of demonstration by which he professes to have convinced himself of the existence of God and the reality of the external world. 'I have hardly ever met a mathematician who could reason,' says one of the interlocutors in Plato's 'Republic,'[2] and this very distinguished mathematician would certainly not count among the few exceptions. As is well known, he begins with the attitude of universal scepticism, and his first effort is to get out of it by securing some foothold of certainty, however narrow. Doubting everything, he cannot doubt of his own existence, for that is implied in the very act of doubt, which is thinking, and to think is to be. Now, the second rule of the famous method was to break up every difficulty into as many distinct questions as possible. Here there was an excellent opportunity for subjecting the notion of existence to an

[1] 'Discours de la Méthode,' Troisième Partie. [2] 'Republic,' 531 E.

elementary analysis. But not the feeblest step in that direction is attempted. The reality claimed for the thinking subject is assumed without more ado as the logical equivalent of what had been provisionally and hypothetically withdrawn from the external world; at least no sort of distinction is drawn between them. And yet, directly afterwards, this bare act of thinking is transformed into the assurance that he, Descartes, is a substance whose whole essence is to think; and this is pronounced equivalent to saying that the soul, by which he is what he is, is entirely distinct from, and even easier to know than, the body, and that it does not depend on the body for its existence. Whence it would seem to follow logically that as we know something about existence apart from self-consciousness, the two notions are distinct, and neither can be deduced from the other; or else that they are identified, and that existence cannot be intelligibly predicated of the external world.

In the absence of such dilatory enquiries, worthy only of the old and superannuated philosophy, our instruction advances by leaps and bounds. I find in myself, says Descartes, the idea of a perfect being. The rest of us are, perhaps, less fortunate; but the results of his introspection need not be disputed. Whence, he proceeds to ask, did it come? It has apparently never occurred to this great founder of modern philosophy that the necessity of finding a cause for everything is a rather large assumption, calling aloud for another application of the second methodical rule. But to proceed. I cannot have got this idea of a perfect being from myself, for my doubt proves me to be imperfect. You seem to forget that absolute certainty of self-knowledge which you claimed only five minutes ago. By your own account you have within yourself an example of perfection quite adequate to the suggestion of an ideal type. But in fact you are making stray reminiscences of the catechism do duty for metaphysical arguments. You are a much more interesting writer than Aquinas, but your logic is childish compared with his; and your neglect of Aristotle fatally revenges itself in a slovenliness of thought for which even Aristotle's predecessors would not lightly have made themselves responsible.

Descartes was perhaps more interested in securing a firm basis for physical science than in establishing transcendent

metaphysical verities. God as a perfect being must be truthful, and his veracity guarantees the reality of our experience. Fortunately the internal evidence of science proved a better authentication of its claims than any the philosopher could devise. As a system of the world, Cartesianism, where it was original, was false, and merely blocked the way when more fruitful methods came into use. Descartes' real influence lay in stimulating the great theological reaction which for a time arrested all progress in France, and was only brought to an end by ideas formed in a widely different school of thought.

More effectual help to rationalism was given by his elder contemporary, Hobbes. How far the author of the 'Leviathan' was a Christian or theist of any kind is still doubtful. Many passages may be quoted from his works going to prove his orthodoxy, and a few going to prove the opposite. The former have been explained away as mere expressions of official deference to the Church of England, which Hobbes considered a useful instrument of government, and possibly, like a modern disciple of his, a protection against real religion. But the sceptical passages may with equal plausibility be explained as no more than an attack on the pretensions of Puritanism and the Sects generally to override the authority of the State in matters of faith. Certainly Hobbes represented in an extreme form a tendency of the Renaissance, to which attention has been already directed, the tendency to reinvest the State with that religious authority, unquestioned in antiquity, of which it had been robbed by the international Church of the Middle Ages. All parties in England combined to oppose the teaching of Hobbes, except the frivolous court of the Restoration, with which he had otherwise little in common. But no one stood so massively for that principle of State-supremacy in ecclesiastical questions to which the majority of Englishmen have always ultimately rallied; nor, in spite of his mathematical heresies, had the cause of English science a better friend. For after the fall of traditionalism, mysticism was the most dangerous enemy with which reason had to contend, and it was against mysticism that Hobbes' most trenchant criticism was directed.

Meanwhile, the great movement of opposition to supernatural

religion, by whatever authority, lay or clerical, it might be imposed, a movement not unrepresented in the thirteenth century, revived with the Renaissance, taken up only to be abandoned by Sir Thomas More, and maintained at the stake by Giordano Bruno, was reaching its highest expression in the most typically philosophic mind of the age, a poor Jew who made his living by polishing glass lenses at Amsterdam. 'Spinoza,' says Taine, in one of his early letters, 'was the real Descartes.' But Spinoza owed more, perhaps, to Hobbes than to Descartes. From the English thinker, at any rate, he borrowed the idea of Power, which is fundamental with both, although with the later-born it gains a wider extension and a more varied application. Not that the idea belonged in any exclusive sense to Hobbes. Like most of the thoughts then current, it had come down from Greek philosophy, combined with elements of greater dignity in Aristotle, and more prominently put forward in Stoicism, a system which was then attracting much attention as a competitor for the place left vacant by Aristotle's fall. But the philosopher of the English civil war had given it a new and permanent significance by resolving all natural phenomena into modes of motion, which is a form of Power, and all human nature into the desire and effort to obtain Power. Spinoza goes further still. He makes Power the sole reality of things, their essence and that which is manifested by them. It cannot be conceived as limited, for nothing could limit it but another power, and its nature is perpetually to expand. Accordingly its manifestations, or, as Spinoza calls them, the attributes of this one substance, are infinite in number, and each of them has an infinity of its own, through which the essence of the absolutely infinite substance is revealed. Descartes had called Extension the essence of body, Thought the essence of mind; and Spinoza kept these two names to denote the only two attributes known to us; but he will not call them essences. There is no essence, no reality but the one Power that they reveal. Extension must not be mistaken for space. Space and time are mere modes of imagination, confused presentations of things as they actually are, that is to say, physical forces linked together in an infinite network and eternal procession of causes. And accompanying this material universe there is the other attribute of substance,

thought, composed of what Spinoza calls ideas, better expressed by what we call feelings or states of consciousness, with the proviso that in elementary bodies the accompanying consciousness is infinitesimally minute. With increasing complexity of physical structure there comes increasing distinctness and intensity of consciousness, reaching its highest known degree in the human mind. Combinations of ideas answering to casual conjunctions of bodies give confused perceptions. Ideas combined in logical order reproduce the real connexion of cause and effect, giving reasoned knowledge or right action, for intellect and will are one; and the eternal chain of ratiocination thought out in nature is the infinite intellect of God.

God with Spinoza is only another name for the substance consisting of infinite attributes, each manifesting its essence, which is Power. He never tells us that God is impersonal, simply because the notion of personality had not then acquired the prominence since given it as a crucial test of theological issues. But he spares no pains to let us understand that such was indeed his meaning. Besides identifying God at the outset with the totality of existence, in the subsequent analysis he carefully eliminates every predicate that might mislead us into conceiving this absolute reality under the likeness of a human soul. No mistake can be greater than to suppose that the philosophy of this Jewish recluse was in any respect inspired by reminiscences of Hebrew religion. Christianity, with its doctrine of an incarnation, is really much more suggestive of an infinite Power revealed through its co-eternal attributes than is the unapproachable God of Judaism, separated by an impassable chasm from all created beings. But the parentage of Spinoza's pantheism cannot be referred to any concrete historical religion. It came to him from a far different source, from Neo-Platonism, gradually refined and clarified in the alembics of mediaeval thought until it was ready for treatment by the geometrical method, as he received that method, reduced to perfect French lucidity, from the hands of Descartes.

But if Spinoza departed widely from the passionately personal creed of his Hebrew ancestors, he did not, on the other hand, fall into the mysticism of his Alexandrian and mediaeval

predecessors. His Absolute Being is not all-absorbent, but all-diffusive. Differentiation, not assimilation, is the keynote of his system. Hegel has called him an acosmist rather than an atheist, meaning that his philosophy was the negation, not of God, but of the world. The epithet is curiously infelicitous. No thinker was ever more a cosmist than the author of the 'Ethica,' none ever conceived the universe more completely or more consistently as an ordered whole. His deficiency, if any, is on the side of unity and sameness, not on the side of variety and individuality. In order to the realisation of that inexhaustible Power which is the essence of things, the production of ever new forms must go on to infinity; nothing that is can be quite like anything that has been or that ever will be. The most seemingly insignificant trifles have their importance, for without them the Infinite would have missed one of its manifestations, the universe would be incomplete. Even nonentity has a part to play in the system, being made responsible for the whole of what we call moral and physical evil. All sin proceeds from ignorance. All the pain and sorrow of life are but indications of failing power.

In denying the personality of God Spinoza implicitly denied the whole of what is ordinarily understood by religious belief. But he also met and explicitly contradicted the current theology on particular points. Miracles in the sense of interferences with the order of nature do not happen, nor can they be conceived as happening. No one believes that two and two can make five, nor that the three angles of a triangle can be greater or less than two right angles; and physical laws, if we understood them perfectly, would be seen to have the certainty and inviolability of mathematical laws. If any of the wonders recorded in sacred history actually occurred as sensible phenomena they were the result of natural causation misinterpreted by ignorance and superstition. And as there is no divine interference with an order which is itself the expression of God's nature, so neither is there any such human interference as that known under the name of freewill. For man is not above nature, but a part of it, and all his actions are as rigorously necessitated as the falling of a stone—which, by the way, were it conscious, would believe that it fell by its own free choice.

True freedom consists in the subjection of lower to higher feelings; for in the dynamics of human nature one emotion can only be controlled by another. Perceiving the advantages of co-operation with a view to the heightening of individual power, we enter into contracts for mutual help with our fellow-men; and good men are kept from violating those contracts for their private interests by a vivid sense of the benefits that justice secures.

In his assertion of pantheism and in his denial of freewill Spinoza follows the Stoics. But he parts company from them in his rejection of final causes. Like Socrates, they had held the world to be the work of a benevolent intelligence, adapting means to ends for the advantage of mankind. But such an interpretation of nature could hardly be reconciled with the revelations of the new astronomy, and it was summarily rejected by the new pantheism. Everything in the world exists by strict necessity of mechanical causation, or, in the language of the higher philosophy, exists that it may fill a place among the infinite possibilities of the universe. Man finds some things about him that he can turn to his own account, and others injurious to him that he avoids; but the useful things were not created for him, nor sent in answer to his prayers, any more than the noxious things were inflicted on him as a punishment for his crimes. They are like the properties of geometrical figures, which may or may not be helpful to us, but which exist by an inherent necessity, whether we wish it or not.

I have already referred to the deeply religious temper of the seventeenth century. That temper shows itself in the devotional language, approaching to mysticism, with which Spinoza has invested the last part of his Ethics. He tells us about God's infinite love for himself, and about the soul's love for God, given without the expectation of a return. But such phrases mean no more than that the world reflects itself, has the knowledge of itself as a perfect whole, through the attribute of thought; while the individual mind has the faculty of arriving at a pleasurable consciousness of its place in the eternal order—a sort of feeling which the eternal order cannot be expected to reciprocate. So also when Spinoza tells us that we feel ourselves to be eternal, one can easily understand, even apart from his express declarations on the subject, that such an

eternity has nothing to do with endless continuance in time. No more—or no less—is implied than that we occupy a fixed place in the timeless order of nature, a place and presence without which the infinite would be imperfect, would not be itself.

Spinoza was called an atheist by his contemporaries, and that not merely by ignorant or rancorous theologians, but by the most erudite and impartial critic of the age, the great French sceptic, Pierre Bayle.[1] This has seemed a crying injustice to later ages more in sympathy with the spirit of his teaching. And, indeed, when a writer fills several pages with what he calls a demonstration of the being and attributes of God, there seems something offensively paradoxical in implying that, after all, he does not believe that there is a God. But when we come to read those pages and to grasp their full meaning, the position seems to be reversed. Surely, we say, the paradox consists in applying a name always understood to connote consciousness, personality, love of good, pity, hatred of wickedness, to what is either a mere abstraction or else a collection of distinct objects exhibiting opposite, and even mutually contradictory, qualities. The answer of the pantheist is that the vulgar deistical conception of God involves us in much more fatal contradictions, that such attributes as infinity, eternity, omnipotence, and absolute goodness are incompatible with the limitations of personality, with the toleration of evil, with the infliction for no beneficent purpose of endless suffering on created beings, and so forth. But that, he argues, is no reason for renouncing the idea of God altogether. That would be emptying out the child with the bath. He urges that at all times genuine religious emotion has been pre-eminently associated with just those attributes which exclude personality in their object, and the contemplation of which in reference to ourselves lifts us above the limitations of our own personality, and gives us the disinterested happiness of becoming one with the whole. And he would distinguish his creed from atheism, not only as a positive from a negative creed, but also as an ordered unified system from a dispersive, chaotic view of nature, practically tending towards isolation and selfishness.

It cannot, however, I think, be affirmed that Spinozism

[1] 'Dictionnaire Historique et Critique,' Tome XIII., p. 416.

is altogether free from this tendency toward dispersion and isolation, or that it does not emphasise the self-assertion of the parts and their vigorous claim to an existence of their own, rather than their fundamental unity with the whole and their meaninglessness when detached from it. There had been philosophies before and there were to be philosophies after Spinozism of a far more markedly monistic character, and appealing far more powerfully to the religious imagination. Spinoza's age was indeed one of strongly accentuated individuality, of self-assertion more or less associated with an ideal of simple justice rather than with an ideal of self-devotion; and the sciences then cultivated with most success, dealing as they did with inorganic nature, or interpreting organic nature on mechanical principles, would encourage this tendency still further, would help to intensify its speculative expression. What deserves attention is that Spinoza, working on egoistic lines, should have risen to such a disinterested standpoint as that represented in the 'Ethica.' For this, perhaps, we have to thank the sweet and noble nature brought away with them by his people from their old southern home.

No religious belief in the ordinary sense could coexist with such principles as have just been set forth. Nevertheless, the attitude of Spinoza toward the popular religion was not unfriendly. Like most of his race, he had no love for the Roman Church; but Biblical Protestantism, as he knew it, seemed to supply the mass of mankind with a satisfactory substitute for philosophy. It taught them their moral duties; and in presenting those duties as the direct commands of God it did but throw his own system of sanctions into a concrete and vivid shape. That an institution should possess enduring vitality was already a strong recommendation in the eyes of this realistic optimist; much more, then, if it contributed to the preservation of civil society. With a large-mindedness, rather rare among Jews, he fully granted that the infinite had been revealed more completely in the person of Jesus Christ than in any other of the sons of men. Miracles are impossible, and therefore Christ's Resurrection cannot be accepted as a literal fact, but it has its value as a symbol; and to the Apostles, at least, it was a real event.

Not only does Spinoza foreshadow the various modern attempts to reconcile religious belief with philosophy, but he is also the father of modern Biblical criticism. He saw clearly that the Pentateuch was a post-exilian compilation; and if his analysis of its contents is mistaken, nothing much better could be expected from the state of learning at that time, nor indeed was the right solution of the problem discovered until nearly two centuries more had been spent on its investigation. But in calm scientific impartiality he has never been surpassed; and the consciousness of his own perfect sincerity evidently predisposed him to credit others with the same sincerity. In his remarks on the early history of Judaism and Christianity there is none of the tendency to impute fraud to the founders of positive religions so common among the rationalist controversialists of a later age.

Spinoza has always acted as an emancipating and suggestive influence rather than by the direct teaching of reasoned truth. What is distinctive and original in his philosophy has not been confirmed by subsequent research. To lay bare the fundamental ambiguities and arbitrary assumptions on which his pretended chains of mathematical demonstration depend would be easy; but it is a task more appropriate to a critical history of philosophy than to a history of rationalism. Here it will suffice to point out that what may be called the puzzle-map theory of existence has not been confirmed by experience. So far as we can see, things do not fall into a graduated order, every member of which has its place predetermined by the opening of a logical possibility, then and there to be filled up by an inrush of creative power. Nature seems to rejoice in self-repetition more than in endlessly new modifications of being. Some thirty years ago Spinoza's identification of extension and thought suggested an anticipation of the modern theory, according to which nervous action and consciousness are to be conceived as two sides of a single reality. But that theory—never particularly intelligible—seems now to be considered incompatible alike with a sound psychology and a genuine idealism. As regards freewill, an enormous preponderance of unbiassed philosophical opinion has decided against it, but on grounds distinct from those

adduced in the 'Ethica,' which seem to depend for their validity on what I have called the puzzle-map theory of existence.

Much the same may be said about miracles. The epigrammatic argument of the 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus' that God would not break his own laws has indeed had a great success, and long continued to defray the expenses of controversy among the deists of the eighteenth century. Minds accustomed to the logical analysis of conceptions are less easily satisfied. They want to know what is meant by 'law,' 'breach,' and 'God.' On a personal view it would seem that he who makes a rule has the best right and the most power to alter it for his own convenience. Spinoza did not believe in a personal God, and therefore for him such human analogies were equally worthless one way or the other. What he meant was, in fact, that the nature of things could not change itself. His objection to miracles comes with less grace from rationalists who, retaining the old belief in creative providence, freewill, and future retribution, cannot stomach the more obvious interferences with the course of nature recorded in religious legends. Of course, science, by tracing unbroken lines of connexion between events and their physical antecedents, in cases where such connexions were not formerly perceived, tends to emphasise the exceptional character of miracles, if they do happen; and, by setting up very strict canons of evidence, tends to weaken the alleged testimony to their occurrence. But this is reasoning on probabilities, and so far a departure from the high *priori* road of earlier rationalism.

It was, however, a significant symptom that the deductive method should be found changing sides; and perhaps the most important immediate outcome of Spinoza's philosophy was to discredit the authority of Descartes' abstract *a priori* reasoning in favour of the popular theology by showing that it could be used with equal or greater force to establish a metaphysical system absolutely destructive of what that theology held most dear. Descartes hurries us through a series of propositions externally linked together by rather arbitrary appeals to the test of exclusive conceivability. I think, therefore, I am; I find among my thoughts the idea of a perfect Being; this must have been produced by a corresponding reality—besides which perfection involves reality in its idea; a perfect being

must be omnipotent, and therefore must have made me; must be truthful, and therefore cannot deceive me; I should be deceived were the world of sense unreal, therefore it is real. Spinoza operates with the same categories, but identifies the terms which Descartes had merely linked together as steps in a causal sequence. Myself, thought, existence, perfection, power, truth, God, the extended universe—these are essentially one substance, and reveal themselves through one another, in whatever order they are taken, by virtue of this fundamental identity. But in passing through this assimilative process they have lost all religious value, their original meaning and mystery have evaporated. And it was precisely owing to the Cartesian partnership between faith and science that this absorption of the weak by the strong had been brought about.

Meanwhile the destructive action of reason on religious belief was going on within Christianity itself. Like the mediaeval heresies to which it succeeded, Protestantism had appealed from the tyranny and corruption of the Roman priesthood to the theory and practice of primitive Christianity, to the religion of the Bible. But the Reformers were content to discard just those dogmas which seemed to authorise the claims of the priesthood to dominion, preserving all the rest of the Catholic system, persuading themselves that what really rested only on tradition could be satisfactorily proved from Scripture, and burning the more audacious heretics whose interpretation of Scripture differed from their own. In this they enjoyed the full support of the princes and nobles who had carried the Reformation through, and whose zeal for free enquiry was exactly measured by their hope of plunder. To question the decrees of the first four great Councils would hardly justify the confiscation of any more Church lands, and might even provoke a dangerous popular reaction, leading to the restoration of the lands already confiscated to their former owners. Unfortunately this new orthodoxy decreed by the civil power had but one, and that a doubtful, advantage over the old orthodoxy decreed by ecclesiastical authority. It demanded assent to a somewhat shorter catalogue of absurdities. Undeterred by the fear of torture and death, certain enquirers,

mostly of Italian birth, gradually convinced themselves that this so-called primitive Christianity and religion of the Bible was neither primitive nor Biblical. Criticism had not taught them what it has taught us, that Catholic theology grew up by a process of gradual evolution not yet complete when the New Testament canon was closed. Accordingly some things in the creeds cannot be proved from Scripture at all, while others can be both proved and disproved by appealing to different sets of texts. Spinoza denied all authority to so inconsistent a document; and assuredly its authority has not been restored by showing how the inconsistencies arose. More timid interpreters appealed to reason where there seemed to be a conflict of authorities; and in point of fact the less unreasonable doctrine was always the more primitive.

Italy, it has been observed, was the birthplace of these more advanced Protestants. We must not attribute this derivation to any particular boldness on the part of the Italians, who on the contrary are in speculation a rather timid race. The cause is purely historical. Before that great revival of the classic spirit known more distinctively as the new birth of art and learning, there had been a revival of Greek philosophy—the age of the Schoolmen—and before that, again, a revival of jurisprudence, a renewed enthusiastic study of Roman Law, of what has been called written reason. It did not perhaps do much to rationalise the judicial procedure of the Middle Ages, but it helped to weaken authority by dividing it, by strengthening secular sovereignty against the Papacy, thus eventually contributing to the formation of national states. And nowhere was Roman law cultivated with more ardour than in the Ghibelline cities of Italy, the cities which stood for the Emperor against the Pope. High among these ranked Siena, once the victorious rival of Guelfic Florence, yet for all her secular partisanship a home of mystical devotion. Here there lived a family in which the study of law became hereditary, the Sozzini. The first of them to make a name in theology was Lelio, a contemporary of Calvin. Having been induced to study the Bible in order to form an opinion of his own on contemporary controversies, he read it like a lawyer, anxious to find no more in the text than it really contained, anxious also to find nothing that was not consistent with reason. But if Roman law gave

a reasonable interpretation to the notions of personality, responsibility, retribution, and justice, then Catholic theology was wrong. Three persons, each of them a God, make three Gods, not one. Sin and punishment cannot rightly be transferred from the guilty to the innocent. Finite transgressions cannot merit infinite suffering. Lelio wandered about from country to country, but at that time no toleration was anywhere granted to the public profession of opinions like these. It says much for the security of the post that he was able to communicate them by letter to his relations in Italy. The new doctrines found an able advocate in his more celebrated nephew, Fausto Sozzini, the systematic founder of Socinianism.

During the second half of the sixteenth century greater freedom of opinion existed in Poland than in any other European country, probably because it was the most aristocratically governed of all European states; and up to the French Revolution heresy and aristocracy have been habitual allies. In Poland accordingly Fausto found a home, and there he published the catechism which Harnack regards as having dealt a fatal blow to the whole edifice of Catholic dogma.[1]

The poison, as it was called, spread rapidly. Jurieu, the great French Protestant theologian, writing in 1681, declared that Socinianism was the religion of the younger clergy in Roman Catholic France;[2] and there is evidence of its diffusion all over England at a somewhat earlier date.[3] Some of the greatest Englishmen of the seventeenth century, if they did not go all lengths with Sozzini, were certainly Anti-Trinitarians. If the Athanasian Creed is true, Milton, Newton, Locke, and Lord Chancellor Shaftesbury are among those who without doubt shall perish everlastingly; and in course of time the staunchest English Puritans lapsed to similar tenets. Nor was the influence of the Italian jurisconsults limited to those who accepted their official teaching. The application of reason to religious belief became more habitual within the pale of orthodoxy, producing a latitudinarian trend among the Anglican divines of the Stuart period, and enlisting an increasing body of

[1] 'Dogmengeschichte,' Bd. III., p. 653 *sqq*.

[2] Quoted by Bayle, 'Dictionnaire,' Tome XIII., p. 362.

[3] Dr. Owen, quoted in Chambers's 'Encyclopaedia,' Vol. X., p. 368 (Art. 'Unitarianism').

opinion on behalf of those principles of toleration which Fausto Sozzini had been among the first to proclaim.

Europe, in fact, was getting sick of religious wars and persecutions, and at the last great outbreak of fanaticism Louis XIV.'s dragonnades had the effect of filling the countries round France with ardent apostles of toleration; while even the co-religionists of those who perpetrated that great iniquity found freedom of conscience a very convenient doctrine to advocate where they were in a powerless minority; so that even such a merciless bigot as James II. had the effrontery to profess himself the champion of toleration. But no party could afford to identify itself so completely with the cause of free discussion as the rationalists, to whom, indeed, it was a question of life and death, for they relied solely on argument, and without a fair hearing the strongest arguments are useless. Spinoza had rather ingenuously assumed that the best means for attaining this end was to destroy the authority of Scripture, as if in the absence of freedom his opponents would ever permit its authority to be disputed; and as if they would not point to his conclusions as furnishing in themselves a sufficient condemnation of the method by which they were obtained.

To reason on behalf of reasoning is indeed either a hopeless or a superfluous task; for however stupid her adversaries may be, they are not so stupid as to allow her to judge, or even to plead, in her own cause. But, fortunately for the interests of truth, other methods are available. The habit of discussion is catching, and spreads without asking leave. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the provinces where blind submission to authority is preached as a virtue and the provinces where it is denounced as a weakness or a vice.[1] Where great advances have been made in material prosperity or in natural knowledge, a new prejudice arises in favour of the conditions under which such brilliant results have been obtained. Now, toward the close of the seventeenth century it seemed increasingly certain what those conditions were. They meant a departure from the timid tradition of the Middle Ages, a return to the loftier tradition of classical antiquity.

[1] This idea belongs peculiarly to Sir Leslie Stephen, who has explained it with great fulness and brilliancy in the essay on 'Poisonous Opinions,' contained in the volume entitled 'An Agnostic's Apology.'

That is the point to which we are brought back again and again, to the deliverance wrought by the New Learning, by the spirit of Hellas re-risen from her tomb. Historians have shut up that revolution within far too limited an epoch. Beginning long before Petrarch, it long outlasted Luther, rallying indeed to fresh conquests as Luther's Hebrew Renaissance shrivelled into the skeleton of dogmatic Protestantism or evaporated in the gaseous products of mystical Protestant pietism. Not that what was good in Hebraism had or has anything to fear from true Hellenism, which at this crisis came to save it, to save the Reformation from enemies without and within it. In England the secessions to Rome on the one hand, and to Geneva on the other, which threatened the existence of her Church under Charles I., were averted by the latitudinarian movement under Charles II.[1] In France the work of religious unification had no sooner been achieved by Louis XIV. than it was undermined by the work of a French Protestant refugee, the famous Critical Dictionary of Pierre Bayle.

Imbued with Greek scholarship, Bayle passed, or at least wished to pass, for a Sceptic in the original Greek sense, that is one who, finding that all general propositions, or at least all general propositions relating to the ultimate facts of existence, can with equal probability be affirmed or denied, suspends judgment in reference to all. Faith is inconsistent with itself and with reason; but reason is also inconsistent with itself. We saw in the first chapter of this work that such scepticism has sometimes led back to a sort of tired-out belief, has often been, and still is used by religious believers as a method of faith. It played that part in the philosophies of Montaigne, Charron, and Pascal. Belief, they thought, was at any rate the safe side. But we saw also that, so used, it is a form of unreason, and as such suicidal. Accordingly the decision is passed on to what I have called ophelism, the method which estimates the truth of beliefs by their utility. But the scepticism of Bayle is complete, and embraces this new test. When he wrote the appeal to results was not indeed very well timed. For more than a century and a half the dissensions of Romanist and Protestant had filled Europe with horrors, culminating in

[1] Hallam, 'Constitutional History of England,' Vol. II., p. 221.

the crime which drove many thousand families from their homes and robbed France of her most industrious citizens. On the other hand, it was vain to contend that purity of private life depended on religious belief, when the recently published biography of Spinoza showed how one whom Bayle and all the world regarded as an atheist could exhibit in himself a perfect model of virtue. And Bayle found other examples of moral excellence which owed nothing to religion in the lives of sundry Greek philosophers, which he detailed with obvious predilection in his dictionary, while the crimes and vices of King David, the man after God's own heart, were dwelt on with equally unmistakable satisfaction.

Loud complaints were called forth by this unedifying procedure of the illustrious scholar. But the exasperated theologians had better have held their tongues. Their remonstrances only gave Bayle an opportunity for restating his case in an apology which is a masterpiece of lucid irony, while at the same time it brings together in a most readable form the substance of numerous articles, or rather notes to articles, previously scattered over two enormous volumes. There are, he urges, various motives prompting to virtuous actions besides those furnished by religion, and frequently surpassing them in strength. Worldly honour, for instance, will make men fight a duel, although they know that it is forbidden by God's law. Idolaters are often good in spite of their religion; so why not philosophers without any religion? Moreover, these so-called virtues of the heathen sages, their chastity, integrity, patriotism, and benevolence, not being inspired by the love of God, were not really virtues at all, but, as St. Augustine observes, merely splendid sins. And then, after all, facts are facts. A writer of fiction may be justly censured for making his good people all atheists; but a historian can hardly be expected to represent historical characters in a false light, because in the opinion of certain persons it is not desirable that the truth about them should be known. God can quite well dispense with this sort of pious assistance; and besides, real religion is better served by showing the practical inutility of idolatry as compared even with atheistic philosophy. Whenever the case occurs of an irreligious person who has led an immoral life, it has been duly recorded, and the biographer ought not to be blamed if such

cases are few, if indeed there are any. He has looked for them carefully, and invited the public to supply him with instances, but without success. Probably during the whole existence of the human race there have been some desperate criminals in whom every trace of religious belief had been extirpated; but unfortunately their names have not been preserved; and no robber or cutthroat has ever professed himself an atheist on the scaffold. Nor is this more than we should expect from the goodness of God. What awful consequences would not ensue if characters of exceptional depravity were freed from the restraints of religious belief, and if the unbelievers were not predisposed by temperament and education to the practice of duty! Why, society would simply cease to exist—a catastrophe irreconcilable with the moral order of the world.

Flippancy and irony apart, Bayle was profoundly occupied with the problem of evil. For him the contrast between profession and practice was only a part of the much wider question, why does God—if there be a God—permit his laws to be disobeyed? Neither Romanist nor Calvinist, neither Socinian nor Manichaean, could remove his difficulties. 'Pitiable' is his favourite epithet for their solutions; and pitiless is the dialectic with which he tears up the cobwebs they have spun in their attempts to justify the dealings of God with man. Here, again, his classical studies have proved most helpful; nor can it be said that he has added much beyond fresh illustrations to the arguments brought by the New Academy against Stoic optimism. Leibniz came to the rescue of orthodoxy with his famous thesis that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. The phrase has passed into an ironical proverb, but is less ridiculous than Voltaire made it appear. Not for nothing has language distinguished the best, which may be merely the least bad, from the superlatively good. The chief pessimist of our own time adopts and defends Leibniz's principle, while energetically maintaining that this best of all possible worlds is worse than no world at all. Voltaire would hardly have gone so far, at least not with safety to his own philosophical deism, although he does not seem to have noticed that it committed him to a more cheerful view of things than the Christian theism of Leibniz, which included the doctrine of

a Fall. Had Bayle lived to read the 'Theodicée,' he might have objected that if God could not create a perfect world, there was no sufficient reason why he should create any world. But such a rejoinder was hardly open to the patriarch of Ferney.

Bayle's Dictionary has been described as the great arsenal whence the freethinkers of the eighteenth century drew their weapons. This, if true, would imply that they added nothing to the rationalistic arguments of Greek philosophy, which it certainly presented in a compendious and accessible form. But the statement can only be accepted with very serious reservations. Biblical criticism, on which Bayle hardly dared to touch, had an important part to play in the coming controversy, and in close connexion with it the crucial questions of prophecy and miracles came up. Here Spinoza is the true precursor. And, what is more noticeable, a merely negative position such as Bayle occupied did not appeal to the mind of Europe. A positive principle was needed, a standard for the army of progress to rally round. Spinoza had offered such a principle, but he came too soon, and his scholastic method has always remained repulsive, even to the elect. Moreover, his theory of graduated existence had been captured and recast in the orthodox interest by Leibniz. What we call science was as yet fragmentary, unsystematic, ambiguous; its chief representatives were, as we have seen, very religious men, finding in their knowledge of physical processes a new support to their religion. There remained, still almost untried, and now, after two centuries of criticism, still unexhausted, the conception of Natural Religion, which Bayle had passed by with brief contemptuous notice, but which had endured through all the vicissitudes of Greek philosophy, had been accepted as fundamental by the reasoned faith of the Middle Ages, and was now exposed to view by sceptical denudation as the bedrock of theological belief. How the general relations between reason and religion shaped themselves under the guidance of this conception is a subject which must be reserved for separate examination.

CHAPTER III

THE ENGLISH DEISTS

A ONCE celebrated but now well-nigh forgotten English politician of the Early and Middle Victorian period, John Arthur Roebuck, tells us that, when a young man in Canada, he was found by his mother sitting up late one night over a quarto volume, which he had just brought home from Quebec. It was Locke's 'Essay on Human Understanding.' She asked him 'what possible use there was in that sort of matter.' Writing long afterwards, Roebuck observes, 'I had then, as I should have now, much difficulty in finding an answer.'[1] The remark is very characteristic of this typical Philistine, who, as he saw no good in the culture of the feelings and the imagination, saw none in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. But it comes as rather a surprise in reference to Locke, who has sometimes been made responsible for the degraded standards of English life. It might be said that without him Roebuck and the far greater men with whom Roebuck co-operated in the earliest and brightest period of his erratic career would not have been what they were, that he formulated a philosophy for the Whigs of his own time, and inspired a philosophy for the Radicals who eventually succeeded them.

'For this, however,' Mrs. Roebuck might have replied, 'we have to thank the Treatises on "Civil Government" and on "Toleration": I still want to know what good came of the "Essay on Human Understanding."' One might answer that it revolutionised European thought. But what the revolution was, and how it was effected, are questions deserving a more attentive examination than they generally receive.

Locke himself has told us, in his own homely and vivid

[1] Roebuck's 'Autobiography and Letters,' p. 26.

style, how the Essay first came to be planned, and what was its aim. Talking with some friends over a problem which they found themselves unable to solve, it occurred to him that the proper method of enquiry was, first of all, to ascertain what are the powers and limitations of the human understanding, with what subjects it is and with what it is not able to cope. Kant asked himself the same question a century afterwards; and although his analysis of the cognitive faculty is far more difficult to follow than that given by the English philosopher, he has left us far more clearly informed as to the motive and the result of his investigation. Nurtured among the Pietists, his interests were primarily theological. God, freedom, and immortality were for him the fundamental problems, the starting-point and goal of all his thoughts. I cannot doubt that, living when Locke lived, religion had for him at least an equal charm. He has not told us who were his friends, nor where they met, nor what was the puzzling question that left them 'quickly at a stand by the difficulties that rose on every side.' But all becomes clear if we assume that the puzzle was of theological origin, and that the solution is to be looked for in that chapter of his Essay where the respective provinces of faith and reason are defined.

Pascal and Bayle had set these two sources of conviction against one another, the earlier thinker openly defying reason, the later thinker covertly discarding faith; Locke puts an end to the controversy by definitely subordinating faith to reason. For, according to him, faith simply means the belief that a revelation has been given to us, and that it is true. But this can only be known by a process of inference possessing no authority beyond the general validity of reasoning as a method for ascertaining matters of fact. If, then, the contents of the alleged revelation contradict reason, they ought to be rejected; for the authority of the general principle must always exceed that of the particular application. Nor is this all. If, as in the case of Biblical belief, a revelation is accepted, not as directly given to ourselves, but on the credit of those who profess to have been its original recipients, faith is not one degree but two degrees weaker than reason, involving as it does a double inference with a double possibility of error. Locke does not discuss the notes of an authentic revelation, whether as the object of belief at first or at

second hand; but he gives us pretty clearly to understand that it can hardly be used to inform us of what the mind's unaided powers are competent to discover; and this principle, as we shall see, was turned with formidable effect against supernatural religion by his immediate followers.

Wherever it had stood, or under whatever form it had been published, Locke's vindication of the rights of reason would have been felt as a new danger to irrational belief. But coming where it did in the context of the 'Essay on Human Understanding,' it told with incalculably greater power. For Locke did not, like his predecessors, talk about reason in an arbitrary subjective way as a compendious name for the unanalysed convictions of his age or of his party. Reason with him falls into its natural place as the consummation of that vast evolution by which the contents of consciousness are built up from the elements supplied by sense, and our knowledge of a world existing apart from sense is assured. And at every step of the enquiry his conclusions are tested by their agreement with the general experience of mankind. The methods of experimental verification so successfully employed in the physical sciences are boldly applied to mental problems, and with the same destructive effect on time-honoured illusions. Thus the doctrine of innate ideas, so naïvely accepted from Greek philosophy by Lord Herbert and Descartes, is at once dissipated by an appeal to the beliefs and practices found existing among the aboriginal races of America. Ancient and modern sceptics had practised the same method, but only to discredit a reason which for them was identified with dogmatism. Locke was no sceptic, but a firm believer in reasoned truth, in the true reason that is based on agreement, an agreement always attainable by taking pains, and by limiting our speculations to subjects within the reach of human understanding. So far as English thought went, the danger to reason from tradition and authority had disappeared, but the danger from mysticism and what he calls enthusiasm was pressing; and it is against this, whether under the form of pretended innate ideas or of irresponsible individual inspiration, that his most powerful and interesting arguments are directed.

People called this noble thinker a Hobbist; and the nickname did him much injury in the brooding, jealous, suspicious

mind of Newton. Doubtless, like Spinoza, he had received a powerful impulse in more than one line of speculation from Hobbes, 'that most vigorous and acute of human intellects,' as Macaulay, with not much overstatement, calls the author of the 'Leviathan.'[1] But it is chiefly through the new direction given to those impulses by his successor that Hobbes has influenced thought, and influenced it in a manner widely different from his original purpose. Locke's inferior genius was more in touch with current tendencies, more conciliatory, and therefore more effective. His services to rationalism in particular were incalculably more conspicuous. The elder philosopher had, after all, made reason subservient to authority, although that authority was transferred from the Church to the secular sovereign. A belated survivor of the earlier Renaissance, he stood for a kind of restored Paganism, a system under which men of thought and learning might talk materialistic atheism in their private conclaves, while the multitude worshipped under forms prescribed by law, and listened to sermons inculcating blind obedience to their hereditary sovereign. Such a doctrine might suit Charles II. and a few of his courtiers, but it revolted all that was serious and sincere in the mind of England, whether Cavalier or Puritan, High Church or Nonconformist, Tory or Whig. It even came into conflict with the favourite Greek philosophy of the age, the Platonic spiritualism which, as interpreted by Cudworth and his school, was rapidly superseding the Stoic and Epicurean materialism of the early seventeenth century.

Locke, on the other hand, if but a moderate liberal, was a liberal along the whole line. Under no form did authority over opinion find favour in his eyes—whether as scholastic tradition, or innate ideas, or individual mysticism, whether exercised by the Church or by the State. While preserving the fiction of a social contract, he denies that it was ever understood to involve the surrender of the very rights for whose protection it was framed. Government exists only as a guarantee for person and property, and may interfere with the liberty of the subject only so far as is necessary for the attainment of that end. Papists, indeed, are not to be tolerated, because they will tolerate nobody else if they can help it; nor atheists, because their

[1] In the Essay on Bacon.

principles, or absence of such, endanger the social union. These exceptions and the reasons given for them are dangerous concessions to the spirit of the age, and a sad falling-off from the fearless comprehensiveness of a Spinoza and a Bayle. But practically they left opinion as much latitude as it needed at that epoch. Himself a good theist, Locke supplied theism with much better arguments than those contained in the 'Method' and the 'Meditations' of Descartes. For the rest he kept clear —or seemed to keep clear—of all metaphysical implications. Reason in his philosophy stood pledged neither to the materialism of Hobbes, nor to the dualism of Descartes, nor to the pantheism of Spinoza. His analysis of the contents of consciousness studiously left men free to form their own conclusions as to what lies beyond consciousness, subject only to the conditions of self-consistency and agreement with the established results of experience.

While the meaning and scope of reason were being shown forth with a power, a distinctness, and a charm unexampled in the whole previous history of philosophy, the principle of authority had reached an advanced stage of decomposition and collapse. Each religion seemed shut up within immutable limits, just strong enough to hold its own, but not strong enough to gain ground on its rivals. The Turkish invasion of Austria had failed, and the Venetian occupation of Greece was doomed to fail also. Within Christendom Romanism and Protestantism had subsided into a torpid equilibrium, any trifling disturbance in favour of the one being speedily compensated by an equal gain to the other, as when the expulsion of the Huguenots was followed by the proscription of the national Church in Ireland. Then, as now, dreams of reconciliation led to the same bitter awakening. Leibniz, with his characteristic passion for harmony, sought to arrange terms of reunion with Bossuet, but renounced his scheme on being met by an impracticable demand for unconditional surrender to Rome. And within the Protestant communities Calvinists and Anglicans had similarly failed to establish unity of faith either by persuasion or by force.

The deadlock of authority was the opportunity of reason. The halcyon days of the early seventeenth century had returned

with better hopes of duration, and it seemed as if the work vainly attempted by Lord Herbert might be resumed under happier auspices. It was undertaken by a young Irish adventurer of plebeian extraction, but not unlike Herbert in character, and perhaps his superior in ability, the vain, restless, and pushing Toland. A convert from Romanism with a taste for philosophy, he promptly took up Locke's principles, at least in so far as they affected religion, and soon after the appearance of the 'Essay on Human Understanding,' won fame, or at least notoriety, by a small volume entitled 'Christianity not Mysterious.' It brings out with sufficient clearness some unexpected consequences of the chapter on 'Reason and Faith' in Locke's Essay, some account of which has been given above. Briefly stated, Toland's position is that mysteries, that is to say, self-contradictory or unintelligible doctrines, ought not to be, and indeed cannot be, believed. Assuming, then, as the author throughout assumes, that Christianity is true, it cannot be mysterious. Nor indeed as originally taught was it mysterious. The notion of mystery comes from Paganism,[1] and has no place in the pure light of revelation, whose object was to clear up difficulties, not to increase them. It has been argued, observes Toland, that natural knowledge involves as great a strain on our reason as any theological dogma by representing the essences of things, the ultimate properties which make them what they are, as unknowable.[2] But the two cases are not analogous. God has revealed all that is important for us to know about the constitution of bodies; that is, we know what they are in relation to ourselves. So far there is no mystery; and in like manner we may reasonably expect that what revelation teaches with regard to God's attributes in reference to ourselves shall be made perfectly plain. What God is in himself and apart from us we do not know any more than we know the essence of a plant or of a stone; nor in either case is our ignorance of any consequence.

Toland's book raised a storm; and Locke hastened to clear himself from any responsibility for his would-be disciple's opinions;[3] though how they differed from his own is not easy

[1] 'Christianity not Mysterious,' Sect. III., chap. i.

[2] *Op. cit.*, chap. ii., 18.

[3] Fox Bourne's 'Life of John Locke,' Vol. II., p. 416 *sqq.*

to explain. But it won the author a European reputation. Satirists maliciously observed that the fop who used his bookcase as a convenient receptacle for pill-boxes and tailors' patterns spared a place on its shelves for 'Christianity not Mysterious.'[1] Nor was the appreciation limited to men of fashion who found religion a galling restraint. Toland corresponded with a princess in whose lineage intelligence was hereditary, Queen Sophia of Prussia. The great Leibniz condescended to dispute with him on knotty points of philosophy.[2] His name became known even beyond the limits of Christendom; and many years after the publication of his first work, a Turkish Effendi with whom Lady Mary Wortley Montagu conversed at Belgrade asked her for news of Mr. Toland.[3]

Friends and foes alike seem to have discerned that the young rationalist's professed adherence to Christianity, whether sincere or not, was merely provisional. Their suspicions were speedily justified. In his letters to the Queen of Prussia he explains all supernatural religion, in a manner startlingly suggestive of certain modern theories, as an illusion evolved from the funeral rites of primitive man;[4] before many years were over he had passed from the school of Locke to a sort of amalgam compounded of Hobbes and Spinoza; he died a declared pantheist;[5] and in his last work classical quotations take the place of the Scripture texts with which his juvenile essay had been interlarded. But these subsequent developments, however interesting in themselves, remained apparently without effect on current thought, and must be regarded rather as reverting to an earlier than as anticipating a more modern type of irreligion.

The next important document of rationalism is Anthony Collins's 'Discourse of Freethinking.' Like Toland, Collins was a disciple of Locke, but, unlike him, a personal friend and favourite of the master. This, however, may be connected with the fact that his hostility to the popular religion was not publicly declared until several years after the old

[1] 'Tatler,' Vol. II., p. 417, No. 113. The paper is said to be by Hughes.
[2] Leibniz, 'Philosophische Schriften,' Vol. VI., pp. 508–21.
[3] 'Lady Mary Montagu's Letters,' Vol. I., p. 373.
[4] 'Letters to Serena,' ii. and iii.
[5] According to Littré, the word pantheism was coined by him.

philosopher's death. It seems to have been partly provoked by a retrograde movement in public opinion. His 'Discourse,' published in 1713, speaks of the Freethinkers as a generally detested sect. Possibly their increasing numbers were exciting suspicion and alarm; while the rise of coffee-houses and newspapers would intensify and diffuse such a sentiment when it once began to be felt. But a deeper cause seems to have been at work, no less a cause than the intellectual decline of England; or, if that expression be objected to, the diversion of English intellect from theoretical to practical interests; from poetry, philosophy, and science to politics and business; within art from ideal creations to the observation of an often petty reality; within learning from the accumulation to the diffusion of knowledge. English poetry, which had been, and was again to be, the first in Europe, almost disappeared; English science, also for a time the first in Europe, came to a standstill; the English Universities ceased to send forth thinkers of the first class. Even in literature the surprising number of Irish writers implies a relative sterility on the side of the mother country.[1] The intellectual decline was accompanied by a strong anti-liberal reaction in politics. London, which in Milton's time had been a citadel of freedom and a workshop of new ideas, made a hero of the silly Sacheverell for no better reason than that he preached as a religious duty the doctrine of slavish submission to consecrated tyranny.

In such circumstances even the powerful Dissenting interest could hardly defend itself against popular fanaticism. Rationalism, which had to encounter the bitter hostility not only of the mob, but also of the educated classes, from Newton, himself a heretic, down, found itself in still worse straits. Collins tells us that since Sacheverell's trial, England had witnessed a formidable revival of superstition, the belief in witchcraft had returned, and several old women had been prosecuted for that offence.[2] Confronted by such prejudices, he set himself, in no very hopeful mood as compared with

[1] Swift, Berkeley, Steele, and Farquhar were born in Ireland; Congreve, if not born, at least was educated there; Arbuthnot was Scotch; Vanbrugh of Flemish extraction, and partly educated in France; Pope by his religion was largely secluded from English influences.

[2] 'Discourse of Freethinking,' p. 30.

Toland's confident and joyous tone, to vindicate the cause of freethinking in religious questions, that is, the submission of every proposition whatever, as regards its meaning and truth, to the arbitration of reason, or, as he calls it, the use of the understanding, in contradistinction to authority. His argument starts, as all such arguments must, from the dissensions found among believers, all appealing to authority, but unable to agree as to where that authority resides. Bayle's Dictionary seems to have supplied him with all the relevant facts, except a few instances culled from the English latitudinarian divines. Bayle also stands him in good stead with his catalogue of virtuous unbelievers. But he replaces Bayle's ironical hypothesis of a special divine grace bestowed on atheists by the shrewd remark that a small and unpopular body of men are more likely than others to avoid giving scandal by their conduct, while their absorption in intellectual pursuits leaves them neither time nor inclination for vicious indulgences.[1] And in the true spirit of the whole rationalistic movement he quotes the history of classical antiquity as a proof that unrestricted liberty of speculation does not breed political disorder. He also points to the disappearance of the belief in witchcraft, with its attendant evils, in England and Holland, as a benefit due to the progress of enlightenment,[2] and to its recrudescence in England as a consequence of the recent reaction associated with the Sacheverell affair. This argument is so good that it has been resuscitated by a modern rationalist with great abundance of historical illustration, but without any essential addition to Collins's plea.

I have said that the chief intellectual force of England was at that time arrayed on the side of traditional Christianity, and Collins was soon made to feel the weight of its hostility to his position. Among the numerous answers called forth by his essay two at least are well worth reading for their high literary merit. One is by the greatest genius, the other by the greatest scholar, of the age. Swift partly abridged, partly parodied, the 'Discourse of Freethinking' so ingeniously as to exhibit the writer and his arguments in the most ludicrous aspect imaginable. Bentley tore to ribbons his display of learning, and showed that some of his classical examples were irrelevant as against Christianity. But neither of these two redoubtable

[1] 'Discourse of Freethinking,' pp. 120–1.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 27–8.

controversialists touched the real gist of the question; and both by their avoidance of it betrayed an uneasy consciousness of the slippery ground on which they stood. Collins merely argued for the right, the duty, and the utility of free enquiry quite irrespective of the conclusions to which it might lead. Being himself a deist, and assuming, as he did, that truth was best elicited by the fullest and freest discussion, he might naturally suppose that the result would be unfavourable to revealed religion. And the unwillingness of his adversaries to concede the liberty demanded seemed to suggest that they were inclined to agree with him on that score. But if the suspicion was unfounded, nothing would have been easier than to dispel it. They had only to withdraw their opposition to freethought and to aid in procuring a repeal of the laws and customs by which certain opinions about religion were protected against public criticism. This they would have been extremely sorry to do; and such being their position, they had no right to complain if the cause of liberty became identified with the cause of infidelity.

Swift tries to assimilate the authority of the clergy in matters of religion to the authority exercised by the medical and legal professions in their respective jurisdictions; and the same wilful or unconscious fallacy has continued to crop up ever since. It would have had more force if the production of Molière's anti-medical comedies had been forbidden, or if the introduction of the Habeas Corpus Bill had rendered its promoters liable to the penalties of high treason. Bentley contemptuously repudiates Collins's right to quote the disappearance of witchcraft as a consequence of freethought. It has been effected, he says, by the advance of science, no part of which is due to this writer and his sect, but to the Boyles, the Sydenhams, and the Newtons.[1] But apart from the fact that the belief in witchcraft owed its extinction far less to any particular discoveries in physics or medicine than to the new habits of reasoning diffused by science—it might well be urged that those great men would never have made their discoveries had they been hampered by the restraints of an authoritative tradition such as Bentley strove to uphold in theology, such as he utterly discarded in questions of classical philology.

[1] 'Works,' Vol. III., p. 320.

The leading freethinkers of that period—or, at least, the declared ones—were Whigs; although some distinguished Tories, such as Pope and Bolingbroke, were known to hold the same opinions in private. Swift takes advantage of this circumstance, as another famous master of gibes and flouts has taken advantage of a similar association in our own time, to saddle the whole Whig party with the odium of rejecting the popular religion.[1] The charge was, of course, unfounded, and is sufficiently disproved by the abuse heaped on freethinkers before the appearance of Collins's Discourse, in the 'Tatler,'[2] and after its appearance, in the 'Guardian,'[3] where Addison in particular makes himself conspicuous by the unwonted violence of his language and the equally unwonted clumsiness of his raillery. But there is this characteristic difference between the two parties that the Whigs—at least in the days of the 'Tatler'—'would not have persecution so far disgraced as to wish these vermin might be animadverted on by any legal penalties;' while Swift[4] and Bentley[5] would have put down the demand for free enquiry by force. And while the Whig journalists are honest enough to admit, though with some disgust, the pure lives led by the critics of supernatural religion, the Master of Trinity holds that no man can question the truth of Christianity unless he has a personal interest in the non-existence of future punishments for the wicked.[6]

As an English country gentleman of disinterested character and unblemished reputation, Collins had less to fear from such threats and taunts than Toland. While fulfilling the duties of his position he continued to read and think. He had been reproached with putting Christianity on the same level with such notorious impostures as Buddhism, Brahminism, and Parseeism, with magnifying the differences among the clergy, with ignorantly using minute textual variations as arguments against the authority of the New Testament.

[1] 'Works,' Vol. VIII., p. 164.
[2] Vol. II., p. 114, No. 135.
[3] No. 130, August 10, 1713.
[4] P. 194.
[5] P. 333. Bentley at that time found it for his interest to support the Tory Government.
[6] Pp. 317–19.

But no such objections could be raised against the controversial methods of his next deistical work, 'A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion.' The issue raised is indeed far more restricted than such a title would suggest; but from the standpoint of theological science as then organised it is decisive. Collins's subject is the relation between the New Testament and the Old, or what is known as the argument from prophecy.

I mentioned in the preceding chapter that the Jews would never accept the Christian interpretation of their Messianic prophecies as predictions of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, and I took the responsibility of assuming that modern scholarship is on the side of the Jews. Indeed, if words are to be interpreted according to their obvious and literal meaning, the case against reading Christology into the Hebrew Scriptures is so convincing that even the Fathers could only meet it by an exegesis which would be tolerated in no other enquiry, or, if tolerated, would equally prove any other religion to be true. This was the mystical or allegorical method by which any statement of any prophet or psalmist, or any event or object described by any Jewish historian, could be turned into a type or symbol of some incident in the Church's history or of some dogma in the Church's creed. Now, it happened that a contemporary of Collins, the erudite, ingenious, and eccentric William Whiston, while utterly repudiating this method of interpretation, had proposed to replace it by another method of his own invention, not more rational in itself, and without the prestige of patristic authority. He contended that the books of the Old Testament, as they originally stood, contained prophecies literally fulfilled in the Christian revelation, but that these prophecies had been carefully eliminated by the Jewish Scribes, whose falsified copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, both in the original tongue and in the Greek version, had alone been transmitted to posterity. Collins takes the trouble to refute this monstrous theory; and, so far, he would carry the whole orthodox party with him. But he evidently shares Whiston's well-founded contempt for the allegorising method. No direct attack on it is made; but the shifts to which its advocates have recourse are dissected with such merciless lucidity that their irrationality needs no further exposure.

Granting the truth of Collins's contention, two consequences follow. In the first place the argument from prophecy, which used to be put in the forefront of Christian apologetics, falls to the ground. Quite apart from any miracles recorded in the Gospels, the Gospel-history itself had been represented as one long miracle, as the fulfilment of predictions made long before, safe from all suspicion of misconception or falsification of antiquity, attested beyond the reach of doubt, and unimpeachable as manifestations of supernatural power, since no human foresight is equal to the prevision of events in human history, with exact indication of dates and circumstances, centuries before their actual occurrence. This miracle, without which, according to Collins, no other miracle proves anything, was now shown to be a delusion. But he goes further still. Not merely is a support removed from Christianity, but without that support, according to him, it collapses. Locke had already insisted, with abundant citation of texts, that in the beginning the great article of Christian faith, the very condition of salvation, was a simple confession of the Messiahship of Jesus. And, if the evangelists are to be trusted, Jesus himself continually insisted on the fact that the Messianic prophecies were fulfilled by his ministry on earth in conjunction with his death and resurrection. If the Gospel incidents did not mean that they meant nothing.

Thus the radical discrepancy which makes all belief based on mere authority its own refutation was extended from a discrepancy between the religion of the Bible and the other great Asiatic religions to a discrepancy between Christianity and the Jewish revelation on which it professed to be based. It was no longer a question of trifling variations between different texts of the New Testament, but of a fundamental difference between the readings of God's ways in the New Testament and in the Old. After centuries of calumny and persecution Israel's undying witness against superstition was unconsciously vindicated by a child of the hostile Church.

Not that Judaism as a positive religion had much cause to triumph in the result. In the course of a violent controversy which ensued Collins had occasion to examine the claims of the Book of Daniel to prophetic inspiration. Reviving an argument long before put forward by Porphyry, and recently

hinted at by Spinoza, he showed that the predictions of the pretended Daniel are Maccabean forgeries relating to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, and going no further than the date of their composition. Here, again, deistic rationalism has been completely verified by modern criticism.[1]

However they might labour special points of scholarship, orthodox apologists always fell back in the last resort on the ophelistic method. Christianity was true, or rather was to be upheld, because it provided morality with powerful sanctions, and provided a machinery for diffusing it among vast multitudes, inaccessible to other impulses or restraints. 'Faith,' in Addison's opinion, 'draws its principal, if not all its excellency, from the influence it has upon morality.' The clergy are to be considered as so many philosophers, their churches as schools, and their sermons as lectures on morality and theology. Socrates and Cicero would have been delighted to hear of a government which made provision for the compulsory attendance of all ranks and both sexes every seventh day at these edifying performances.[2]

What Socrates and Cicero would have thought about philosophers whose chief interest lay in their own preferment, and who looked on the laws against blasphemy as their most convincing dialectical weapon, may be left to conjecture. But they would, no doubt, have forgiven Addison and other imperfectly Hellenised barbarians for their Judaising professions in consideration of the circumstance that their maxims and models of conduct were habitually gathered, like those of the hated deists, from Graeco-Roman rather than from Asiatic literature. Most modern divines would set no more value on the chilling support of Swift and Addison than on the occasional conformity of Toland and Collins; and Addison at least might prefer the religion of nature to a church overrun by his two great bugbears, enthusiasm and superstition—for such assuredly is the aspect under which modern Anglicanism, and not Anglicanism only, but most of our religious manifestations, would present themselves to this kindly but cool observer.

It is a common mistake, though now perhaps less common

[1] Lechler, 'Geschichte des Englischen Deismus,' p. 283.

[2] 'Guardian,' No. 130.

than it was once, to look on this cool reasonableness, this horror of enthusiasm, as the dominant note of the eighteenth century. It certainly dominates the poetry of England and France, and even infects the classic poetry of Germany, with most mischievous results. But the spiritual aspects of an age do not always find their chief representative in its poetry. The great art of the century was not poetry but music, which, for all that certain critics may say to the contrary, is generally admitted to be the most emotional of all arts. Its architecture, as represented at least by the baroque style, seems to set reason at defiance. Its painting is a delicate suggestion of sensuous enjoyment, sometimes healthy, sometimes morbid, rather than an appeal to intellectual interests or a construction of great ideas in form and colour. In prose fiction it is too often offensively didactic, though relatively not more so than its successor, and not without abundant compensation in the way of adventure, sentiment, and passion, elements of aesthetic enjoyment not usually classed as rational. In politics the eighteenth century has a bad name for devotion to material interests; and there is truth in the charge, although only a half-truth. But against this we must set its miracles of inspired audacity, its unparalleled series of adventurers in war and statesmanship, from Bolingbroke and Charles XII. to Mirabeau and Napoleon, who, vanquished or victorious, have filled the world's memories or changed its face for ever. Finally, that very enthusiasm, so shocking to Addison, which leads the mind to fancy herself under a divine impulse, so that she slights human ordinances and refuses to comply with any established form of religion, was ablaze in German Pietism when he wrote, and was soon to be imported from Germany to England in the mysticism of William Law and the apostolic zeal of Wesley and Whitfield, with such consequences to the Church of England herself as Evangelicalism and the Tractarian movement.

So much is necessary by way of prelude in order to understand the position occupied by the great moralist of the free-thinking school, Anthony Ashley, the third Lord Shaftesbury. This writer, a grandson of the turbulent statesman best known by Dryden's famous satire, was a pupil, though not a disciple, of

Locke. By the philosopher's direction he picked up Greek and Latin from a nurse chosen for her familiarity with the classical languages, and at six years old could prattle in Greek as easily as in his mother-tongue.[1] After a few years at Winchester the youth was sent to travel abroad. He visited Holland, then the headquarters of European criticism, and spent some time in Italy, the home of visible beauty in all its forms. But young Ashley had read in his Plato that beyond and above the beautiful things of nature and art there is an invisible beauty of the soul, inspiring a more ardent passion, and bestowing by its possession a more intense delight. That beauty is virtue, that passion is the right enthusiasm, the real, the only true religion; and virtue is rescued by that self-delight from the corrupting association, to which Christian moralists have condemned her, with slavish terrors and selfish hopes.

Here we have the key to a just estimate of Shaftesbury's place in the history of thought. That enthusiasm from which even the cultivated Addison shrank with alarm was shown by the far higher culture of this young patrician to have no necessary connexion with sour faces and narrow conventicles, or with delirious antics and ruinous faction-fights. Greek in origin, it had been recognised by Greek philosophy as the secret of every great achievement in statesmanship, in creative art, and in speculative thought. All such action is instinctive, but behind these noblest energies lies, as we must assume, a supreme and guiding instinct ignored by Locke, a moral sense, assigning to the springs of conduct their right places in the hierarchy of excellence, accompanied by what is to be carefully cultivated, a saving sense of humour, having for its especial function the duty of testing truth, of preventing religious enthusiasm from running to excess.

His warmest admirers must confess that Shaftesbury himself had little or no humour, and that his blundering efforts in that direction do but mar the expression of an intellectual character essentially serious and sincere. But he had a just prevision of what ridicule might do for truth when wielded by real genius, by such critics as Voltaire and Lessing in his own century, by Renan and Matthew Arnold in the next. Here and everywhere his office was rather to point than to lead. By his enthusiasm

[1] Fox Bourne's 'Life of Locke,' Vol. I., p. 423.

for Greece he stands as a link between the earlier Italian and the later German Renaissance, between the Platonism of the Elizabethans and the Hellenism of Byron and Shelley. This classic taste of his, so much deeper than Pope's or Addison's, so much more human than Bentley's, gave him a curiously acute perception and nervous dread of its future enemy, the Romantic movement, even then beginning in England. The subject is a fascinating one, and has been so neglected that a digression for the purpose of elucidating it may be excused.

Perhaps at no time was the thread of mediaeval tradition quite broken off in our own country, whatever may have been the case in France and Germany. We need not go beyond the 'Allegro' and the 'Penseroso' to see that in Milton's youth tales of wonder and enchantment were still popular with all readers grave and gay, dividing the attention even of the most thoughtful students with the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare. 'Paradise Lost' owes more to the books of chivalry than to the Book of Genesis, and the 'Pilgrim's Progress' is constructed on a similar model. Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' could still be read with delight by a clever child under Charles I.;[1] judging from references in the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator,' it was still a favourite under Queen Anne; and it is mentioned as the only subject that the great Chatham had thoroughly mastered. In the early years of George III.'s reign narratives of tournaments and other chivalrous exercises already, or shall we say still, warmed the imaginations of English youths;[2] and the instantaneous popularity won by Scott's 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' goes to prove that the public taste had been already educated up to its appreciation.

We know by sad experience how this seemingly innocent literary fashion was utilised by obscurantists for the revival of mediaeval institutions and beliefs. Shaftesbury could hardly foresee the possibility of such a retrograde movement, but the increasing passion for marvellous stories struck him as no good augury for the reign of reason. He complains that if books of chivalry have ceased to be read, their place has been taken by equally mischievous studies. His age is a Desdemona whose

[1] Johnson's 'Life of Cowley,' *sub init.*

[2] Sir Nathaniel Wraxall (born 1751) speaks of 'the tournaments and exercises of chivalry with which our imaginations are so warmly impressed in youth' ('Memoirs,' Vol. I., p. 32).

affections are won by narratives like those of Othello. People are so depraved as to prefer a romance to the 'Iliad,' Ariosto to Virgil, and Turkish to Greek history. Not content with the Mohammedan countries, they go still further afield and devour accounts of India, China, Japan, and the Terra Incognita (wherever that may be); all well seasoned with stories of prodigious objects or incidents. And even the contemporary traveller in civilised Europe takes care to feed the diseased appetite of the public by describing 'some enormous fish or beast,' sure to give more pleasure by these than by 'the politest narrations of the affairs, the government, and the lives of the wisest and most polished people.' Of course a man of true breeding, when on the grand tour, will not even look at a Rubens for fear of spoiling his taste, but carefully seeks out the Raphaels and Caraccis; and, however dismal or antiquated these may seem at first sight, returns to them again and again until he has worked himself up into the proper state of admiration. This conscientious gentleman, however, is an exception, the generality not being ashamed to prefer Indian figures and Japanese work to the Caraccis.[1]

What Shaftesbury calls a Gothic taste, what we might call a survival of mediaevalism, did not limit itself to literature. He makes it responsible for the silly gallantry, the barbarous duelling, the savage sports of the time.[2] And we are apt to grow impatient when we find him prescribing his favourite specific, good taste, as a remedy for these and all other evils of the spirit. But taste with him stands for instinctive moral delicacy, for nature and humanity, for progressive civilisation. He writes not only against superstition, but against philosophers like Mandeville, who, having discarded the restraints of religion, affected to treat moral rules as wholly conventional and artificial, as lying at the mercy of the civil government. Compared with such a standard, the taste for beauty seemed constant, or if not constant, at least reducible to fixed principles, which all could learn and apply, carrying their own reward in the exquisite pleasure received from beautiful objects studied with a view to what such principles required. This was what reason meant, balance, harmony, self-restraint, such as classic art and

[1] 'Characteristicks,' Vol. I., pp. 338–50.
[2] *Op. cit.*, I., p. 270.

literature exemplify, such as Greek philosophy teaches. And this, Shaftesbury thinks, is not to be found in the sacred books of the Jews.

How far the author of the 'Characteristicks' would have been satisfied with the course subsequently followed by English and European thought, or what he would have called taste, remains doubtful; nor indeed is the question of any importance. But this much may be said, that his ideas, or ideas like his, were a shaping force throughout the century, and long survived its close. An enthusiastic rationalism fed on classic literature so mingled with and moderated the current romanticism that the share due to each in artistic production, in philosophy, in religion, in statesmanship, defies definition. Both elements contributed largely to the English struggle for empire, to the German struggle for culture, to the French struggle for liberty. And both have continued to work as energetic ferments in the modern mind, as factors in the constitution of future societies and creeds.

In one respect the efforts of Shaftesbury to educate his countrymen were certainly a failure. He had with perfect justice pointed to the English dislike for foreigners and foreign influences as a symptom and cause of English barbarism.[1] But that feeling seems to have been rather aggravated than otherwise by the establishment of a German dynasty at St. James's. Locke, Shaftesbury himself, Toland, and Collins, had learned much from Holland and from the band of refugees who made Holland the basis of their intellectual operations against ignorance and superstition. After them the Continental influence tells only as a reactionary force, and English rationalism draws only on native resources. Its next representative, intrinsically the strongest critic of the whole deistic school, is an unworldly recluse who was never out of England, and probably knew no modern language but the mother-tongue which he wielded with terrible effect.

This was Thomas Woolston, Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, who, after being converted to freethought late in life, made himself notorious by his attacks on the historical character of the Gospel miracles, attacks rendered still more

[1] *Op. cit.*, III., 153–4.

offensive by insulting dedications to the bishops. These were published with his name on the title-page—an entirely new departure in the deistic school—with the result that he first lost his fellowship, and, being subsequently prosecuted for blasphemy, was sent to prison, where he remained till death, from inability to pay the fine imposed by the court, or to find security against a repetition of his offence.

Woolston's conversion had come about in this wise. Deeply read in the Fathers, he had early adopted their mystical method of interpretation, and had made out a long series of imaginary Christological types in the Old Testament. Collins's ironical recommendation of this device for saving the credit of prophecies which were totally inapplicable in their literal sense to the events of the Gospel-history seems to have opened Woolston's eyes, while it suggested a new employment for this elastic exegesis. What if the miracles were the real allegories? The Fathers had often treated them as such while not disputing their literal reality. Woolston disputed it very vigorously; and although modern criticism has altogether superseded his arguments, though his objections are often mere cavils, while his use of ridicule shows the imprudence of trusting Shaftesbury's favourite weapon to English hands, nevertheless there remains a most appreciable amount of genuine rationalism verified as such by subsequent enquiry. One finds the germs, or something more than the germs, of much that has since been put forward on the same side with far greater knowledge of the subject than he possessed, with a scientific calmness to which he had no pretension, and with a zeal for vital Christianity which he perhaps only affected, by Strauss and Baur, by Renan and Dr. Edwin Abbott.

Not that Woolston anticipates what we call the Higher Criticism. He does not discuss the date, authorship, or composition of the Gospels, but accepts the traditional account of their origin, including the very important tradition that the one bearing St. John's name was written last of the Four.[1] Neither does he make the assumption, frequently but untruly charged on modern rationalists as a body, that miracles are impossible. That is more, in my opinion, than any one has a right to say now, and very much more than any one had a right

[1] Third 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 36.

to say then, even had he possessed all the science of his age, and Woolston's science was probably small enough. But rationalism depends neither on the discoveries nor on the assumptions of modern science—a fact too often forgotten. Reason excludes inconsistency; and the inconsistencies which make a story incredible may be detected when very little is known about the laws of material phenomena. Moreover, paradoxical as the assertion may seem, ignorance of those laws does not necessarily make miracles, in the theological sense, more credible, at least to a clear-headed critic. In theology a miracle means the attestation of a divine commission by the performance of works, not merely passing the power of man, and the power of unaided nature to produce, but passing them to such an extent as to be only explicable by attributing them to divine intervention. Now, in the absence of scientific knowledge, the possession of superhuman powers and the occurrence of supernatural phenomena are things frequently reported and readily believed. But the agency assumed to be at work may not necessarily be divine, is indeed generally supposed to be the reverse of divine. It becomes then a question how to discriminate between miracles on the one side and magic and witchcraft on the other. We must know a great deal about God before we can identify any occurrence as a special manifestation of his will. That, perhaps, is a sort of information which theologians are not backward in asserting themselves to possess. But we must also know all about the physical context of the alleged miracle before we can accept it as in any sense supernatural. And that is a knowledge which only physical science can give.

Now, Woolston's logical position is this. Two leading proofs are offered for the truth of Christianity. One is the argument from prophecy; the other is the argument from miracles. Prophecy as a literal scheme of predictions fulfilled by events is a thing which Collins has shown not to exist. The relevant texts must be interpreted figuratively to give them any such meaning. But once admit the figurative method and it can be used, as the Fathers used it, to explain away the literal sense of the miracles. Literally understood, they have no evidential value, for they might have been performed by demons; and the Bible itself tells us that we must judge of the miracles by

the doctrine, not of the doctrine by the miracles. Only apply this principle, and you will see its force. Read as an actual occurrence in private life, the conversion of water into wine is unintelligible, and even rather scandalous. Read as a type of the change from the old to the new dispensation, it becomes highly edifying.[1] Those who are acquainted with the labours of the Tübingen school will recognise in this method of interpretation a nearly complete identity with Baur's explanation of the miracle of Cana. So with the Samaritan woman,[2] and the pool of Bethesda.[3] Here Woolston does not see his way so clearly, but he is on the right track. And in general what he says of the four Gospels, that they are in no part a literal history, but a system of mystical philosophy or theology,[4] if untrue of the Synoptics, fairly expresses the accepted liberal view of the Fourth Gospel.

Not that the difference between them escaped our shrewd critic, who indicates it very clearly in one passage,[5] but fails to draw the inference that the Fourth Gospel is not apostolic. And he calls attention to the omission of the raising of Lazarus by the earlier evangelists as a strong reason for believing it to be fictitious.[6] In discussing the cures related by the Synoptics an explanation is offered identical with the faith-healing theory of modern rationalists, except that Woolston talks of 'vapours' where they talk of 'hysteria,' and of 'imagination' where they talk of 'suggestion.'[7] On the resurrection of Jesus, destined hereafter to become the very centre of controversy, he is most meagre and unsatisfactory. The totally untenable theory of imposture, inherited from early Jewish and Greek objectors, fills nearly all the space at his disposal;[8] but it must be remembered that deliberate imposture was an explanation freely offered by theological controversialists then and afterwards in reference to religious beliefs which they did not share. At the same time the discrepancies in the different narratives are

[1] Fourth 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 45.
[2] Second 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 57.
[3] Third 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 57.
[4] First 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 65.
[5] Third 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 50–1.
[6] Fifth 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 52.
[7] Second 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 28.
[8] Sixth 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 4–48.

not forgotten; and the recorded appearances of Jesus to his disciples are accounted for substantially on the modern system as visions of hysterical women and phantasms of the dead.[1] This indeed was merely returning to the objections of Celsus, whose remarks on the subject are referred to by Renan as excellent.[2]

Events quoted as evidentiary miracles must (i.) be perfectly well attested, and (ii.) must be inexplicable by natural causes. But (iii.) they must also be consistent with the assumed character of the Deity, in proof of whose direct intervention they are adduced. Woolston objects to some of the marvellous stories in the Gospel on the perfectly legitimate ground that they are irreconcilable with our notions of morality. Two especially come under this head, the miracle of the Gadarene swine, and the miracle of the barren fig tree. According to him the destruction of the swine was an infringement of the rights of property.[3] It will be remembered that Huxley, not long before his death, took up precisely the same ground, and held it victoriously against the keenest dialectician of the age. And in like manner the blasting of the fig tree (if it really happened) is shown to have been an immoral exercise of power.[4] Finally (iv.) a miracle is not admissible as evidence by those who would reject a precisely similar story off-hand were it used to accredit the pretensions of a religion in which they did not believe. Woolston justly challenges the divines of his own church to say whether they would listen to an account of a miraculous cure alleged to have been performed on a poor woman by her touching the Pope's garments without his knowledge.[5] This is more than a mere *argumentum ad hominem*. It suggests all the reasons available for rejecting modern miracles, and implies that they are equally applicable to ancient miracles. And at the same time it illustrates the characteristic method of rationalism, the demand that all orders of belief shall be treated on the same principles of evidence.

One sometimes hears this method denounced in a vague confused way as unhistorical. But this is to ignore the real

[1] Sixth 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 29–30.
[2] 'Les Apôtres,' p. 43, *note*.
[3] First 'Discourse on Miracles,' p. 34.
[4] Third 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 4–9.
[5] Second 'Discourse on Miracles,' pp. 16–17.

issue. The question is not by what various motives men's beliefs and actions are determined in different ages or at different stages of social evolution,—but whether or not, in any given case, their statements agree with the reality of things. Human nature varies, its environment varies, and the relation between the two varies, but that particular relation between them which we call truth never varies any more than the relation between the opposite sides and angles of a parallelogram, and, like that, remains always amenable to the same principles of calculation. The laws of right belief never change; the canons of sound logic are applicable to all time and all existence.[1] Where the deists erred was not in declaring that certain creeds were absolutely incredible, but in attributing their former acceptance to imposture or insanity. But the world could afford to wait for sympathetic intelligence. What it wanted then and there was the destructive application of reason to beliefs which were not true. And this the deists gave it in a style which proved that if they did not understand any other age, they thoroughly understood their own. All their books were widely read, and Woolston's pamphlets in particular sold by tens of thousands.

Locke had shown that faith must rest on reason, and Toland that it must agree with reason. Collins added that the disagreement of the authoritative creeds among themselves necessitated an appeal to reason. Collins and Woolston between them pulled down the two recognised props of supernatural revelation, the argument from prophecy and the argument from miracles. It remained to deal with the *a priori* argument for the necessity of a revelation deduced from the admitted existence of an all-wise and benevolent Creator, and at the same time to sum up the conclusions of the whole school in a perspicuous form, and to present Natural Religion to the general public as a working substitute for supernatural theology.

This was done by Tindal's 'Christianity as Old as the

[1] Thus a great master of the historical method has been able to say of Celsus and his criticism of the Gospels, 'les impossibilités du récit évangélique, si on les prend comme de l'histoire, n'ont jamais mieux été montrées' (Renan, 'Marc-Aurèle,' p. 356).

Creation,' a book published in 1730, and sometimes described as the Bible of deism. The author, a Fellow of All Souls, wrote it late in life, and did not put his name on the title-page. As literature it is the dullest production of the school—but it belongs to a notoriously dull period, the years of the 'Dunciad,' the night intervening between Swift's sunset and Fielding's dawn. Nor does it exhibit any particular originality or dialectical ability. But its whole tone is more profoundly serious, and is informed by a higher moral purpose, than anything that had previously appeared on the same side. It seems characteristic that Tindal should belong to Oxford, the university whence nearly every religious movement in English history has proceeded—the anti-papal crusade of Wycliffe, the ceremonialism of Laud, the apostolic enterprise of Wesley, the neo-Catholicism of the Tractarians, the mystical theism of Francis Newman, and the exotic positivism of Richard Congreve. What Tindal taught is already familiar to us under the name of Natural Religion. We have seen how this abstract form of theology originated with the later Greek philosophers, from whom it passed to Cicero on the one side, and to St. Paul on the other. Adopted by the Church, it became a fixture in patristic apologetics and scholastic theology. Finally, the hopeless disruption of Christendom, combined with the continual spread of scepticism, seemed to bring it once more into view as the common ground on which the scattered fragments might meet to sink their differences in one creed and one worship—if worship were still a thing to be desired. The latitudinarian divines of the Restoration and the Revolution, repelled from Rome on the one side, attracted by Greek philosophy on the other, had delighted to point out the conformity of their liberalised, rather colourless Protestantism with the law and religion of nature. Tindal even took the title of his *magnum opus* from a phrase of Sherlock's. But the principle, with which they had merely dallied, he pushes to its extreme logical consequences. Fully admitting the necessity of a revelation for man's guidance, he finds the form of such a revelation in reason, and its content in natural law. A Being supremely wise and good cannot be conceived as limiting the knowledge of what is necessary for right living to one small section of the human race, or as postponing its

full disclosure to an advanced epoch of human history.[1] Nor, in fact, have men been left without such light. Apart from the heathen moralists, heathen religion, according to Plutarch, was a source of happiness, and it cultivated the virtue of mutual toleration to a far greater extent than Christianity. In a less degree the same may be said of Mohammedanism, while Leibniz testifies to the moral excellence of the Chinese, and their superiority in this respect to Christians.[2] In fact, Western Europe is not less corrupt and is much more disorderly than it was under Tiberius.[3] Nor is this wonderful; for the corruption of mankind is everywhere due to priests,[4] who have poisoned morality at the fountain head by substituting the imaginary obligations of superstition for the real and self-evident obligations of natural religion.

Like Chillingworth and Bayle before him, like Gibbon and Mivart after him, Tindal had turned Roman Catholic in his youth, and had derived from his experience of sacerdotalism an unusually ardent attachment for pure reason—a feeling shared by Toland, who was bred in the Roman Church. Like all his school, he cherishes a bitter animosity towards the Jews, regarding them as a priest-ridden people; and a tolerably complete list is made out of the crimes and immoralities committed by their favourite heroes;[5] nor is the New Testament allowed to pass without a certain amount of ethical criticism.[6] As for the Christian dogmas of the Fall, Original Sin,[7] vicarious satisfaction,[8] eternal punishment,[9] the Incarnation, and the Trinity,[10] they are riddled with all the rationalistic objections available before the era of their final dissolution under the form of historical explanation had begun. Nothing remained for Voltaire but to condense, clarify, and aerate what Tindal had poured out with unmethodical profusion from the stores accumulated in a lifetime of reading and reflection.

The deist position then, as finally constituted, amounts to this. Reason is our sole and sufficient guide in life. It teaches us that nature is the work of a perfectly good Being, who

[1] 'Christianity as Old as the Creation,' pp. 409 *sqq.*
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 404.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] P. 379.
[5] Pp. 202 *sqq.*
[6] Pp. 338 *sqq.*
[7] Pp. 385 *sqq.*
[8] Pp. 418–19.
[9] P. 42.
[10] Pp. 87–8.

desires us to be good, not for his sake, but for our own. The rational end of human action is happiness, and happiness is best secured by the observance of moral laws ascertained by studying the natural relations of things. The most essential point is that we, as social beings, should live together in an orderly and mutually helpful manner. Such is the Law of Nature, and such also is Natural Religion. Christian apologists have always admitted its existence, nor indeed could they consistently do otherwise, for nothing can be revealed as from God except to those who are already convinced that God exists and that he is perfect; for he cannot be obeyed unless he is trusted, nor trusted unless he is known to be truthful, nor known to be truthful except as a consequence of his perfection. But, in fact, there never has been a supernatural revelation. Such a communication must either agree with Natural Religion, or add to it, or contradict it. On the first hypothesis it would be superfluous, on the second unintelligible, and mischievously false on the last. And this, which we know by reason, apart from all experience, to be true, is verified by experience in the special case of Christianity. What we justly love and admire in its teaching has been professed and practised by the wise and good in all ages among those who have never heard of the Bible and those who, having heard of it, reject its authority. What it gives along with that precious kernel is a mass of superstitions precisely similar to those which Christian apologists are never weary of denouncing when they find them figuring as an element in the non-Christian religions.

At first sight Tindal's gospel looks like a simple republication of the system put together by Lord Herbert of Cherbury a hundred and twenty years before. There is the same dependence on Stoicism as filtered through Cicero's elegant rhetoric, except that in deference to Locke's criticism innate ideas have disappeared, the same catholic humanity, the same dislike for priests of all denominations. But on closer inspection a considerable progress is disclosed. Herbert recognised the duty of worship; Tindal knows nothing of a divine service distinct from the performance of our duties to each other. And he ignores the future life on which his predecessor had laid such stress as a sanction for morality. This was the result of Shaftesbury's teaching with its inculcation of disinterested

virtue. Possibly Tindal's second volume, suppressed after his death by the faith unfaithful of the executor to whom he had entrusted it for publication, may have contained his views on immortality. But it seems unlikely that no trace of his belief in the doctrine, if he had any, should have appeared in the first and only extant volume.

Among the replies called forth by Tindal's book, two are by writers of ability far superior to his. The first, by William Law, is directly controversial in its character, and has left no mark on the history of religious opinion. Fully accepting Natural Religion as proved by reason, Law contends that the God disclosed by studying the external world must be so far above our comprehension that we are not entitled to lay down beforehand the time and place at which he was likely to reveal his intentions with regard to mankind, the persons who were to be favoured with the revelation, or the teaching which it was to contain. Law also assumes, what no rationalist would admit, that reason gives us the knowledge of sin as a burden to be got rid of, but no knowledge of the method appointed by God for its expiation. And he insists strongly on the sufficiency of the Gospel miracles as proofs of a divine authority bestowed on their performers.

The second reply is indirect, and though evidently called forth by Tindal, nowhere mentions him or any other writer of his school by name, but deals in a general way with their position as a whole. This is the famous treatise of Bishop Butler on the 'Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature.' Butler is still read; and much has been written about him in recent years; but there is something very singular about his standing in philosophy to which, so far as I know, attention has never been drawn. While extolled in England as the Newton of theology, on the Continent he is virtually ignored. In this instance there can be no question of anti-English prejudice, for Hettner, who has a warm admiration for English thought, and who has devoted a whole volume of his great work to English literature in the eighteenth century, never once mentions the 'Analogy.' Nor does the silence arise from anti-religious prejudice; for Lechler, who does full justice to both sides in his admirable history of

English Deism, has only the briefest and most casual mention of Butler.[1]

That English critics on their side should utterly ignore this ignoring of their idol is perhaps no more than might be expected from the habitual limitation of their horizon. And this again suggests, what indeed we shall find to be the case, that there was a peculiar insularity about Butler, a something that appealed to his own countrymen, but appeals to them alone.

This insularity does not belong to the Bishop's doctrinal position, which is by no means that of an Anglican divine as such, but of a Christian believer in general. It belongs to his method, a method admirably characteristic of the mental type developed under the conditions of intellectual life in England. Our modes of reasoning have been shaped under the influence of political and forensic controversy, which by their freedom and publicity have become a sort of higher national education. In Butler the legal element preponderates. It is doubtful whether he would have made a great statesman, although he might have excelled in debate; but he has the qualities of a first-rate conveyancer, of a very clever cross-examiner, of a powerful advocate, of an austere and dignified judge—under that curious system which allows judges to leave the responsibility of the most momentous decisions to a tribunal composed of relatively uneducated persons, while reserving to themselves the more agreeable duty of balancing the conflicting arguments on either side. But perhaps the most exact parallel to Butler's apologetics will be found in the logic of the crown lawyers under the Stuarts. Those authorities made out, to their own satisfaction and that of their patrons, that as the King had a dispensing power in particular cases, he had the right of suspending any law at his own pleasure; and that he could levy shipmoney in time of peace, in the inland counties, and for other purposes than building ships, if in his opinion the public

[1] Butler is a little, but only a little, better known in France than in Germany. This is because the chiefs of the eclectic or spiritualist school found his support of value in their attack on the utilitarians. He finds a place in the 'Biographie Générale,' but to none of the names is so little space given as to our great theologian; while remarkably full accounts are furnished of the deists whom he is supposed to have crushed. The 'Grande Encyclopédie,' however, gives a long account of his writings.

safety required it. Their method, like Butler's, was to convert rules of provisional and temporary expediency into universal and immutable laws.

Butler's style is the style of a vigilant and subtle lawyer, always on the watch for possible objections or misconstructions, always haunted by the dread of making admissions which may be turned to his disadvantage by the opposite side. But his imagination seldom, if ever, rises above the question immediately before the Court or before the House. Anxiety not to prove too little keeps out of sight the much greater danger of proving too much. The 'Analogy' begins with an argument for a future life. I need hardly say that as an argument it is totally worthless, no more being shown than that consciousness can exist independently of the limbs and organs of sense, whereas the real question is whether it can exist independently of the nervous system. But the interesting thing is that the argument, good or bad, goes as far to prove the past eternity of the soul as its future eternity, and proves as much for every other animal as for man. Butler sees the latter though not the former possibility; but the general implications of his method escape him. What analogy would suggest on his own showing —I do not say in reality—is not an immortality of disembodied souls in a state of unchangeable beatitude or misery, but a perpetual transmigration of souls from body to body, with endless vicissitudes of good and evil fortune.

As we proceed the case for this primitive faith becomes stronger. God, we are told, governs by rewards and punishments. In modern phraseology life-subserving actions are attended by pleasure, actions of an opposite tendency by pain; therefore we may suppose that the same system will be continued in a future state. Certainly, if we are to have bodies, if we care to preserve them, if our future fate is to remain, what it is in this life, utterly uncertain, if the alternative between virtuous and vicious conduct is always to be left open. Millions of human beings have looked forward to that sort of eternity; but we send out missionaries to convert them to the hope of better things. Butler gets out of the difficulty with the help of a fresh analogy, or rather by arbitrarily restricting the analogy to such points as suit his purpose. In the visible order of things the possibilities of recovering from a false step or from a fall

are, as he points out, strictly limited. There is a line which cannot be overstepped without fatal consequences. Nature makes death the penalty of certain imprudences; and civil government, which is a part of nature, visits certain crimes with death also. It might be suggested that the conduct which nature is said to punish capitally is wrong precisely because it leads to death; and that the English criminal law of Butler's time was not a very happy illustration of divine justice. But there is no need for subtleties. Let it suffice to observe that nature knows nothing about eternal torments, and that even the Parlement of Paris did not attempt to prolong the agonies of Damiens beyond a single day. The conduct of a deity, even when studiously modelled on that of the most savage despots, can after all be but very imperfectly illustrated by the analogy of their worst excesses. Indeed, the analogical argument would more effectively justify the ways of man to God than the ways of God to man.

That is a danger Butler did not see. But there is another pitfall into which he walks with his eyes open. I refer to the well-known sceptical, or rather atheistic, tendency of the 'Analogy.' If natural religion is open to the same moral difficulties as revealed religion, it seems more logical to argue that both must be rejected than that both must be accepted. And, in fact, Butler is said to have been more successful in driving deists further down the slope of unbelief than in winning them back to Christianity. At the same time it would be a mistake to suppose that he presented the alternative so crudely as some of his modern admirers assume. The Bishop neither did, nor could, shut up his opponents to a logical choice between atheism (or scepticism) and orthodoxy. He and they had far too much common ground to admit of any such summary procedure. He never treats natural religion as a rival system opposed to the Christian revelation, nor yet as a system resting on the same arguments, so that the two must stand or fall together. According to him, the doctrines of God, the providential government of the world, and a future state of rewards and punishments, are truths demonstrable by man's unaided reason. Christianity, on the other hand, rests on purely external evidence, on what were known as the arguments from prophecy and miracles. At most it is contended that the

course of nature gives a certain *a priori* probability to revelation. As the ordinary providential government of the world is administered by a system of delegation, by the interposition of agents between God and man, what more likely than that the work of salvation should be carried on through the mediation of Christ? And as this world's blessings are very unevenly distributed, may we not expect the message of salvation to be communicated with similar degrees of partiality? For some souls that message will have been sent in vain; but we can reconcile ourselves to their eternal perdition by remembering that, after all, it will be their own fault, and that nature, too, kills off those whom she cannot reform.

It seems a strange way of removing difficulties to multiply them *ad infinitum*. But the utter absurdity of Butler's method, as understood by his modern admirers, was less obvious to its author than it is to us, being originally concealed by a logical artifice, which the foregoing summary may help to exhibit in a clearer light. His vague use of analogy enables him to blur the line of demarcation between two quite distinct modes of apologetic reasoning, between furnishing positive presumptions that revealed religion is true, and removing difficulties that impede its acceptance. Sometimes it is left doubtful to which class the argument belongs, and sometimes there seems to be an attempt to convert a battering-ram into a buttress. Many readers, I suspect, must have laid down their Butler without very well knowing whether the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, for instance, is something the recognition of which makes Christianity more credible, or a disagreeable feature of the Gospel only made endurable by reflecting that the transfer of suffering from the guilty to the innocent is an eternal fact of experience, no more explicable under one system of divine providence than under another.

But this indistinctness is a small matter compared with the fallacy of equivocation by which the whole 'Analogy' is pervaded. I refer to the attempted assimilation of government by direct personal intervention to government by law, the equation between natural and supernatural religion effected by a transposition of values from each side to the other. The world of experience as interpreted by physical science, even in Butler's time, presents the appearance of a self-contained

mechanism, an uninterrupted series of causes and effects, where at every moment the total condition of things results from their total condition at the previous moment. It may have been originally constructed and set going by a conscious will, but—apart from the religious tradition whose trustworthiness is under examination—there is no evidence of any interference with the causal chain. That is what we mean by the reign of law. Good, says Butler, but among these constant combinations of antecedents and consequences I observe that moral, that is to say, life-subserving, actions are accompanied by pleasure, and immoral or life-destroying actions by pain. In this arrangement I discern the hand of a moral Lawgiver, just as I should discern it in civil society if the laws of the statute-book had power to enforce themselves without the intervention of the judiciary and the executive. Thus will is dexterously substituted for law. But it will be objected that the visible world by no means offers the edifying spectacle assumed. Without going so far as to say that vice is rewarded and virtue punished as often as the reverse, it is, at any rate, certain that happiness and misery are not distributed in strict proportion to the deserts of those to whom they are meted out. In fact, no other arrangement is compatible with the unimpeded operation of natural causes. That is how the deist explains the existing moral anomalies, and Butler accepts the explanation, quietly putting back law in place of will. At the same time he contends that the visible order leads us—by analogy, of course—to an invisible futurity where justice shall reign supreme, just as childhood is a preparation for the duties of riper age. In the world, interpreted as a state of probation, will once more replaces law. Unfortunately this pedagogic theory of our present life comes into violent collision with the admitted fact that most people grow worse with increasing years, and become less and less fitted for a purely spiritual existence. At this juncture not the utmost audacity of a crown-lawyer under the Stuarts could equal that of our theological Newton. With icy composure he points out a fresh analogy, another constitutional precedent, so to speak. 'Of the numerous seeds of vegetables and bodies of animals which are adapted and put in the way, to improve to such a point of natural maturity and perfection, we do not see that perhaps

one in a million actually does. For the greatest part of them decay before they are improved to it, and appear to be absolutely destroyed.' And so if the number of damned souls exceed the saved a millionfold, that appalling disproportion need not shake our optimistic faith.[1] Here the logic is on a level with the sentiment. Seeds are not sentient beings, death is not prolonged suffering, and the processes of organic growth are quite different from that training of children by wise and good parents which originally suggested the analogy. But all considerations of truth and justice are discarded, in order that will may make its final escape by exchanging identities with irresponsible law.

The atrocious words just quoted seem to indicate a moral perversion, for which some have accounted by calling Butler callous and unsympathetic.[2] Such, however, does not seem to have been his character. What little we know about him rather goes to show that he was soft-hearted, profusely, impulsively charitable. But here we are not dealing with the real man any more than when we are confronted by a lawyer speaking to his brief, or a party politician defending the government for carrying on an unjust and cruel war. In private they may be the kindest of men; but feeling must not be let interfere with business.

Original sin, vicarious satisfaction, and eternal punishment, are thus more or less awkwardly shuffled out of the way by what is offered as an analogy but is really an *alibi*. They may possibly be the results of self-executing law—not, as would seem, the most perfect substitute for personally executed law. Neither Butler nor any other theologian of the time seems to have suspected that when these dogmas were first formulated, neither those who preached nor those who accepted them saw any difficulty or moral mystery about the matter. Once stated, they were self-evidencing truths. That God should employ all the resources of omnipotence to take vengeance on his enemies, that the responsibility for disobedience to his commands should descend through endless generations, or that merit should be

[1] 'Analogy,' Pt. I., chap. v., near the end.

[2] 'He was wanting in feeling and the power of sympathy, and his religious philosophy is grievously marked with this defect. He could even commit the cruel platitude of pointing to the waste of seeds as a parallel to the waste of souls' (Goldwin Smith's 'Rational Religion,' p. 76).

passed about like current coin, seemed no more paradoxical to them than it seems paradoxical to most of us that titles should be inherited, that certain persons should be called a disgrace to their family, or that we should feel proud of the great men whom our country has produced. If anything, the real wonder, the awe-inspiring mystery, was not that God should punish his creatures, but that he should forgive them; and the dogmas afterwards so decried were in fact elaborate apologies, devices to make it appear a little less unreasonable and incredible. And the same modes of thought survive in undiminished vigour among the ignorant classes of modern society, who are always ready to welcome the dogmas which embody them when presented by impassioned preachers in the light of their own emotional experience. It is related that one day when Woolston was walking in St. George's Fields, 'a jolly young woman met him and accosted him in the following manner, looking steadfastly in his face. "You old rogue, are you not hanged yet?" To which Mr. Woolston answered, "Good woman, I know you not; pray what have I done to offend you?"; to which the woman replied: "You have writ against my Saviour; what would become of my poor sinful soul if it was not for my dear Saviour? My Saviour who died for such wicked sinners as I am."'[1] This poor woman's religion does not seem to have been of a very practical character. But her touching speech is worth far more than all that Butler or his fellow-apologists ever wrote in defence of their creed. It goes down to the very core of Christianity, and reveals the chord soon destined to quiver in millions of hearts under the touch of Wesley and Whitfield.

After all, Butler does not give the deist a choice of difficulties, but simply adds a new set to those already experienced. At the utmost he gets rid of a part of the presumption raised against Christianity in the name of natural religion. I say a part; for the admission of a God who rules by invariable law, even when special intervention on behalf of oppressed innocence seems to be demanded, makes against the probability of a miraculous revelation. And Tindal's criticism, whatever else it did, had at least the effect of destroying the *a priori* probability of such a revelation. For assuming—what both sides were

[1] I quote from an anonymous 'Life of Mr. Woolston,' published in 1733.

agreed upon—the existence of natural religion, there seemed a greater probability in its being all-sufficient than in its needing to be supplemented by such late, partial, and obscure disclosures of the divine will as are contained in the Biblical records. The whole controversy then reduced itself to a question of historical fact. Had such a revelation of God's will as Christianity claimed to embody been actually given? And so Butler brings us back to the old arguments from prophecy and miracles, already discredited by Collins and Woolston.

As a result of deistic criticism, the triumphant confidence of earlier apologists gives place to more modest pretensions. Probability in various degrees is substituted for certainty. But to construct a just theory of probable evidence for historical occurrences, even had the knowledge of his time supplied materials for the purpose, was a task beyond Butler's powers. The author of the 'Analogy' was indeed singularly devoid of philosophical intelligence. His treatment of the doctrine of necessity would alone prove his incompetence for grappling with speculative problems. With all the advantage of writing after Hobbes, Locke, and Collins, he totally fails to catch the distinction between fatalism and determinism, between the doctrine that our lot has been fixed beforehand irrespective of our own actions, and the doctrine that our actions, in common with every other occurrence, take their place in an unbroken chain of causes and effects. This, indeed, is another instance of his habitual confusion of law with will. He can only understand necessity as fate, for fate only means some undated resolution of the divine will. The fatalist refusing to act at all, ignores the orderly concatenation of events as much as the libertarian who maintains that his volitions are independent of motives. The one believes in causes without effects, the other believes in effects without causes.

Determinism as a rule goes with rationalism, and the English freethinkers passed for being determinists to a man.[1] The connexion is obvious. Religious belief among the enormous majority of Christians has at all times implied the doctrine that

[1] In the paper in the 'Guardian' referred to above Addison proposes to call them 'automata,' little dreaming that the name would be one day accepted by Huxley and Clifford.

men are sinful, and that as such they deserve punishment after death. But deny freewill, and such a doctrine becomes inconsistent with reason. For it represents the Creator as punishing his creatures for actions the sole responsibility of which falls on himself, since he alone started the chain of causes which produced them. This, of course, is not an admission that freewill would justify future punishment conceived as a useless infliction of pain. It is merely an assertion that hell without freewill would be a moral monstrosity. Nor is it a denial that pain as a deterrent motive may be rightly inflicted on law-breakers in this life. On the contrary, it is a reason for such infliction. The more amenable men are to pleasure and pain, the more desirable is it that these motives should be used to regulate their conduct.

To such considerations, simple as they seem, Butler was, or at least affected to be, totally blind.[1] In this instance he does for once what his usual models, the parliamentary and the forensic advocate, do every day; he tries to get out of his difficulties by raising a laugh. But the unwonted display of humour is grim enough. We are treated to a ludicrous picture of what would happen to a child brought up on necessarian or rather fatalistic principles. Naturally he gets into all sorts of trouble, makes himself generally hated, and, if not cut off by accident in early youth, ends his career on the scaffold. Never was Dr. Johnson's aphorism more relevant, that ridicule is not the test of truth, but truth the test of ridicule. Philosophical necessity is not fate; and the young determinist will, with equally good training, take as good care of himself as the boy or girl who has been nourished on freewill—probably, indeed, his chances of survival will be improved, as such a theory of life tends to make its pupil more patient and less exacting.

Had Butler been brought to see the force of this reasoning, he might perhaps have consented to restate his position in some such terms as the following. 'Distinguishing as you think fit

[1] 'Analogy,' Pt. I., chap. vi. Butler's primary object is to show that, assuming necessity, future punishment is still to be expected. Nevertheless his intention is clearly, at the same time, to write a satire on Collins. I would invite any candid admirer of the Bishop's to read his chapter together with Collins's 'Enquiry respecting Human Liberty,' and then say which is, at any rate, the more modern-minded of the two.

and calling yourselves whatever you please, you must allow that there is a complete analogy between the two systems of government, the natural, or human, and the divine. In both hope and fear are used as motives to secure good conduct, and, freedom or no freedom, the system works well.' It works well, we reply, where experience shows a certain connexion between actions and their consequences; and where the painful associations connected with bad conduct may lead to its avoidance. 'But,' as Bolingbroke says in words which cannot be improved, 'what effect of this kind can further punishments have, when the system of human government is at an end, and the state of probation over; when there is no further room for reformation of the wicked nor reparation to the injured by those who injured them; in fine when the eternal lots of mankind are cast, and terror is of no further use?'[1]

Returning to our more immediate subject of probability as applied to Christian evidences, we have to consider what light, if any, has been thrown on it by the 'Analogy.' Here, where Butler figures as a constructive thinker, he naturally betrays more philosophical incompetence than when he was performing the comparatively easy task of criticism. His way of dealing with the alleged improbability of miracles is boldly to deny it. Their occurrence, according to him, is not more unlikely than the occurrence of any other event. 'There is a presumption of a million to one against the story of Caesar or any other man.' And so evidence enough to prove the story of Caesar is evidence enough to prove a miracle. This is to confound the intrinsic improbability of an alleged occurrence with the improbability of our having been able to foretell what has actually occurred. Then there is an appeal to our ignorance of the constitution of nature as precluding scepticism with regard to the possibility of exceptional events. Here, as elsewhere, the Bishop proves too much, with the result that his argument is absolutely fatal to miracles as evidential facts. To receive them as such we must know quite enough about the constitution of nature to be sure that they were not produced by some merely physical cause. We cannot even accept the reports of their occurrence without some knowledge of necessary

[1] 'Works,' Vol. IV., p. 452 (American edition).

sequence, irreconcilable, so far as it goes, with the sceptical standpoint. For otherwise how can we tell that the witnesses were veracious, that they were not hallucinated at the time, that their memories did not play them false, that the narratives we read really convey the meaning attributed to them? To identify any particular phenomenon as a case of divine interference with the course of nature requires even more than this. To repeat what has already been pointed out, it requires that we should know not only a good deal about nature, but also a good deal about God, and all about the alleged phenomenon—which in the case of the Gospel miracles, as Woolston showed, we do *not* know; while all we know, or that Butler knew, about nature and its First Cause, supplies an overwhelming presumption that the one does not interfere with the other.

Even supposing Butler had provided, what he has not provided, some good working criterion for distinguishing between natural and supernatural occurrences, and at the same time admitting that no better evidence is required for the supernatural than for the natural, he will still have proved too much. Christianity will be suffocated in oxygen, drowned in the flood of miracles let loose on the world. Angel visits will not be few; oxen will speak with the authority of Roman history; witchcraft will revive in Lancashire and elsewhere;—but we may happily rely on the Inquisition to root it out, thanks to the speedy reconciliation of England with Rome, the miraculous attestation of whose claims no true disciple of Butler can dispute. But Rome herself will only enjoy a temporary and provisional supremacy pending the time when some new incarnation of Buddha or some tenth Avatar of Vishnu shall once more let loose the pent-up flood of Oriental superstition on our poor, meagre, half-rationalised Occidental credibilities which once were creeds.

According to Butler's principles, evidence good enough to prove that an old woman was seen coming out of the church door by day must be good enough to prove that another old woman was seen flying over the church steeple by night on a broomstick. The philosophic love of truth for its own sake would have saved him from such an absurdity. But for truth as such he, like many other eminent Englishmen, cared nothing. Knowledge, in his opinion, is only valuable as a guide to action,

and we are often obliged to form the most important decisions on merely probable evidence. If Christianity is true, we are highly interested in believing it; should it turn out not to be true, we have lost nothing by believing it, except, perhaps, some very doubtful indulgences. For practical purposes, therefore, a bare probability—there is a good deal more than that, but we need claim no more—is in this instance equal to the strongest proof.

And a proof, we may add, capable of inconveniently wide application. Butler habitually talks as if there were no supernatural religion in the world but Christianity, and no Christian church but the Church of England. He tells his opponents that their arguments are as good against natural religion as against revelation. But Tindal had been beforehand with him in this dilemmatic logic. There is, said the deist champion, no alternative between the religion of nature and Popery; and he knew something about it, having been a convert to Rome in his youth. He was assuming, indeed, what Butler would not have admitted, that the supernaturalist position really rests upon authority. But the argument from probability has the same tendency. People put about that the Bishop of Durham had been received into the Roman communion on his deathbed—a false and malicious report, no doubt, but one which showed a just perception of the consequences to which the author of the 'Analogy' might well have been driven by his own principles. Henry IV. of France had already drawn the same conclusion. 'All of you,' said that astute politician, addressing a mixed assemblage of Roman Catholic and Protestant divines, 'all of you agree that I may be saved if I become a Catholic. Half of you assure me that if I remain a Protestant I am certain to be damned. I shall therefore choose the safe course, which is the former.' And his example was followed, avowedly for the same reason, by many others of humbler rank in the following century. Pascal turned the terroristic argument against the freethinkers of his time, in apparent forgetfulness of its applicability to the Jansenist controversy. But, with a finer sense than Butler's of the real issue involved between belief and denial, he recommended the destruction of reason by a course of stupefying religious observances.

That a thinker of the highest intellectual eminence should preach intellectual suicide may perhaps be pardoned even by those to whom such mental agonies as he experienced are unknown. But that a gallant French gentleman should be content to rest religious belief on the most dastardly considerations of personal safety is a striking witness to the degrading effect of superstition. Surely there was nothing quite so demoralising as this in the theological opportunism of his unfortunate Jesuit victims. Surely a manlier note is struck by the peasant in one of Mr. Thomas Hardy's novels, who does not deny that the Dissenters have a better chance of being saved than Church people, but maintains that for him at least to follow their example would be a mean way of securing his salvation. And what if, after all, the sordid calculation proved a mistake, if enrolment in 'the strong immortal bands' were not purchasable by the sacrifice of what is least mortal in man, if the King of Heaven reserved his sharpest vengeance for the wretched coward who had not even hidden his uninvested talent in a napkin, but had flung it into a morass? 'Hateful to God and to his enemies' one would think that such souls must indeed be, and destined to a worse abode than Dante's Limbo.

A calculus of probabilities based on utter ignorance of the facts must in truth work out equal chances for all imaginable alternatives. Assuming total ignorance of God, it is just as likely that he will reward vice and punish virtue as the contrary, or that he will reward both or neither. Theologians rely on his promises and threats. But the fulfilment of these has no other guarantee than his veracity, a quality which cannot, without self-contradiction, be ascribed to the unknowable. And assuming a real revelation to have been made, the word veracity is unmeaning unless we are permitted to understand it in a purely human sense. So much will hardly be disputed by theologians, who have always held God's truth to be essentially the same as man's truth—with the trifling exception of calling a million years a day, and the like. But no consideration will justify this assumption which will not also justify us in assuming that his righteousness and mercy are also to be understood in a strictly human sense. Now, that is exactly what Pascal refuses to admit, for, as he truly observes, nothing can be more opposed to our ideas of justice than that Adam's

descendants should be damned for his disobedience. In such conditions—or rather in such absence of conditions—the threat of damnation itself becomes ineffectual. Black may mean black, or white, or some other colour, or no colour at all.

Butler is, of course, much less sceptical than Pascal; and, living in a more rationalistic age, he is obliged to show a certain ceremonious respect for reason. But for all practical purposes—and he is nothing if not practical—his probabilism is equally useless. It supplies us with no principle of preference in choosing between the different Christian communities, or, for that matter, between Christianity and any other religion. If anything, his theories about the soul and its present life, considered as a state of probation, are, as I have pointed out, less favourable to the religion of the Gospel than to the Oriental doctrine of metempsychosis—a conclusion more welcome to Theosophists than to Butler's official successors in the Church of England.

In point of fact the 'Analogy' has tended to send its bolder readers to agnosticism, and its more timid readers to Rome. But its logical applicability to the defence of any and every superstition was exposed at once by one of Butler's shrewdest contemporaries, Thomas Chubb. This man, a self-educated tallow-chandler, is in more than one way a noteworthy figure. In him rationalism, represented at the summit of society by Queen Caroline,[1] and in the very citadel of religious orthodoxy by Tindal, first showed that it had taken hold of the popular mind. His homely name, his homely calling, his homely style, did not make him a prophet in his own country; but he won the respect of Voltaire, and Hettner places him for logical clearness and strength far above nearly all contemporary deists.[2] Chubb's principal achievement is to have shown what a radical difference separates the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels, with his doctrine of unconditional forgiveness following on repentance, from the Pauline theology, with its mediatorial Christology.[3]

[1] 'A deist believing in a future state' is Chesterfield's account of her religion ('Characters,' appended to his Letters, p. 1406).

[2] 'Litteraturgeschichte,' Pt. I., p. 364.

[3] 'On the Equity and Reasonableness of the Divine Conduct in Pardoning Sinners upon their Repentance.' By Thomas Chubb. London. 1737. The

Thus rationalism as a criticism of the inner inconsistency of faith becomes for the time complete. Authority was first shaken by the disagreement between the traditional religions; then Rome and the Bible parted company; then came neo-Arians (or Socinians), differing fundamentally from Trinitarians in their interpretation of Scripture; then the New Testament was set at variance with the Old; then Christianity with Natural Religion; then, finally, the different parts of the New Testament with one another. If any advance was possible, it was likely to be made on other lines.

Before going on to fresh developments, it seems desirable, in deference to literary tradition, that I should say something about the part played by the celebrated Conyers Middleton in the movement whose course has here been briefly traced. The reputation of this writer, though great, is, like Butler's, almost exclusively English. Indeed, but for his 'Life of Cicero,' Middleton's name would be practically unknown on the Continent. Nor is the neglect to be wondered at, for, had he never lived, the history of rationalism would in all probability have been pretty much what it is now. However, he remains an interesting figure, serving to illustrate the trend of English thought a little before the middle of the eighteenth century. And he prefigures a type destined hereafter to become much more frequent, the type of the freethinking clerical college Don.

Whether or not the 'late Rev. and Learned Conyers Middleton D.D., Librarian of the University of Cambridge,' as he is called on the title-page of his 'Miscellaneous Writings,' had or had not advanced to a complete rejection of supernatural religion is a question of merely biographical interest. Very likely he had; but the fact was never admitted. In the deistic controversy he posed as a candid friend of both sides. Tindal is right in upholding the truth of natural religion independently of Christianity. And some of his strictures on the Old Testament are quite justifiable. The doctrine of plenary inspiration must be abandoned. Understood literally, the story of the Fall is absurd, and even immoral. Interpreted allegorically, however, it becomes remarkable and edifying, as some Fathers of

argument that 'analogy' may be used to prove any religion will be found on p. 35 of this tract.

the Church have shown. And the same may be said of other equivocal narratives in Genesis. At the same time, Tindal's attacks on the clergy are highly censurable, and, indeed, inconsistent with his own principles. By his own admission, what tends to promote happiness is good, nay, the only good; and that is just what the teaching of Christianity does. Nothing else offers such a near approach to natural religion, which, indeed, has never existed in its pure form as a popular creed. Socrates and Cicero did not interfere with the established worship of their time, and we should follow their example.[1] A believer would hardly have written in that blandly cynical tone.

Middleton's fame as a rationalist rests on a book directed against the credibility of the patristic miracles. The circumstances of its origin are curious. It is not, at least primarily, an insidious attack on the Gospel miracles, but a polemic defence of Protestantism in Chillingworth's sense against the pretensions of a High Church and Romanising section of the English clergy of his time. Some of these ecclesiastics, like their successors in our own day, had so far abandoned the traditions of Laud and Charles I. as to drop the title of Protestant, professing to call themselves Catholics without an adjective.[2] They had been greatly provoked by an earlier essay, in which Middleton, working on the materials collected during a visit to Rome, had tried to prove that the rites and ceremonies of modern Popery were copied from the superstitious observances of pagan antiquity. He replied to their complaints by going further and maintaining that the post-apostolic miracles of the first four centuries, till then accepted by many Protestant divines, were frauds or delusions. So dangerous did this thesis seem, that, in order to feel the pulse of religious opinion, he published the Introduction to his 'Free Inquiry' two years before venturing to bring out the work itself.

It came, after all, as a shock. The whole country was thrown into a ferment by the audacity of the Cambridge scholar, and for a time nothing else was talked of in literary circles. The

[1] 'A Letter to Dr. Waterland,' printed in Middleton's 'Miscellaneous Works,' Vol. III.

[2] Preface to 'Remarks and Observations' (Middleton's 'Miscellaneous Works,' Vol. II.).

clergy were generally opposed to his views, or at least to their public advocacy. To many, no doubt, it seemed as if his arguments against the patristic miracles might be turned with equal effect against the Gospel miracles. Nor were their fears without foundation. Middleton agrees with the deists in assuming that God's character has been largely revealed to us by the light of reason; and that certain stories may fairly be rejected without further examination as involving a gratuitous interference with the course of nature for purposes not reconcilable with the divine dignity. And in the 'Free Inquiry' many such stories are related only to be contemptuously dismissed on very much the same grounds that Woolston had brought to bear against the blasting of the barren fig-tree or the turning of water into wine.

But this was not all. In dealing with the question as a whole, in considering, that is to say, not only the abstract credibility of these patristic miracles, but also the particular character of the evidences on which they rested, Middleton brings into play a new element of criticism not available to Woolston. He canvasses the claims of the Fathers to our respect, and shows that their want of judgment and veracity was such as to deprive their testimony to supernatural events of all value whatever. And he also shows that the attestation of a martyr carries no particular weight, since martyrs are known to have been guilty of tampering with the truth when they thought that falsehood would redound to the credit of their faith. Here, no doubt, lay the real sting of the 'Free Inquiry.' That the early Church should be robbed of her supernatural powers seemed bad enough. It was still worse that her leading lights should not be distinguished by any extraordinary goodness or wisdom, but rather the reverse. Such a conclusion would be most unpalatable to all zealous churchmen, and particularly so to a body of ecclesiastics who, like the Anglican clergy, claimed to represent, more than any others, that primitive and uncorrupted communion. With many of these the alleged danger to the Gospel was probably a mere excuse. What they really resented was the derogation to the Church's honour. Nor would their animosity be diminished by the dexterity with which Middleton turned the argument from consequences to the advantage of rationalism. According to him, no precise date can be fixed after which well-attested

miraculous stories can consistently be rejected as frauds. Therefore 'popery' is entitled to the full benefit of their support, whatever that may be worth. Butler's method was beginning to exhibit its accommodating character. It was becoming evident that every argument for Christianity in the 'Analogy' told equally well or better as an argument for Rome.

A volume of essays published after his death showed that Middleton was prepared to criticise the Apostles and Evangelists as fearlessly as he had criticised the Fathers. Peter and Paul were both capable on occasions of dissembling their dearest convictions. The Gospels exhibit irreconcilable discrepancies, proving their authors to have been uninspired and fallible, though honest historians. The gift of tongues did not imply a permanent mastery of foreign languages, and the New Testament is written in very bad Greek.[1] More than a century was to elapse before an English clergyman could again express such opinions with impunity.

Middleton is better known as a classical scholar than as a theologian. But there is an intimate connexion between his studies in both departments. Macaulay, indeed, has affected to discover a striking contrast between the tone of the 'Free Inquiry' and the tone of the 'Life of Cicero,' and has worked it up into one of his superficial antitheses. 'This most ingenious and learned man,' he tells us, 'had a superstition of his own. The great *Avvocato del Diavolo,* while he disputed, with no small ability, the claims of Cyprian and Athanasius to a place in the Calendar, was himself composing a lying legend in honour of St. Tully'—with a good deal more to the same effect. Idolatry of genius is made responsible for this supposed aberration of judgment. But what Middleton had at heart was rather a principle than a person—the principle for which he always fought. He loved and defended Cicero as the representative of humanity, enlightenment, and reason; if he disputed the claims of the Fathers to our unqualified veneration, it was because they stood for superstition, falsehood, and inhuman asceticism. And his idolatry, if such it must be called, for the author of the 'De Divinatione' and the 'De Natura Deorum,' was not peculiar to himself; he shared it with the whole rationalistic school; nor has anything but a deeper knowledge of the Greek masters

[1] 'Miscellaneous Works,' Vol. II., pp. 255–414.

made this once widely spread feeling so much of a historical curiosity to ourselves.

Now that the chief representatives of English deism have been passed in review, it seems advisable, before proceeding further, to sum up the distinguishing characteristics of the movement considered as a whole. What strikes one first of all in this connexion is the extraordinary freedom of thought and speech enjoyed by Englishmen during the first half of the eighteenth century. There had been nothing like it on so great a scale since the age of the Antonines. Except in Holland, there was nothing like it on the European Continent till many years afterwards. Even in England it was subsequently lost during a considerable period, and only within living memory regained. Woolston, as we have seen, suffered imprisonment; but the penalty was brought on him by his own recklessness, and seems to have been of the lightest. On a previous occasion, if Woolston is to be trusted, the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed to him in private his disapproval of all such prosecutions for opinion; and Dr. Clarke, the celebrated theologian, tried to obtain his liberation.[1] Another deist, Peter Annet, was not only imprisoned, but pilloried; but this was in 1763, when the reaction had already begun; and Annet had made himself particularly obnoxious by the violence of his attacks on Christianity. At the close of his life he is said to have applied for, and to have received, assistance from Archbishop Secker;[2] and, whether true or not, the story is good evidence for the spirit of toleration then prevailing in high quarters.

We have next to observe that the leading freethinkers were born and brought up, not in the eighteenth century, but in the seventeenth. Tindal was born in 1656, Toland in 1670, Bolingbroke in 1672, Collins in 1676, Shaftesbury and Chubb in 1679, Middleton in 1683. Thus they were the children, not of calm, but of storm, of an unsettled and revolutionary period, a period also fertile in great intellectual achievements. Those years gave the world a new calculus, a new astronomy and physics, a new psychology, a new system of government, a new and more brilliant strategy.

[1] 'Life of Woolston,' pp. 12 and 18.
[2] Lechler, 'Geschichte des Deismus,' p. 322.

At the same time deism was itself neither revolutionary nor new. It simply marked one more stage in an orderly evolution, advancing step by step from the first Reformers to the latitudinarian divines, from these to the crypto-Arianism of Milton, Locke, and Newton, the outspoken Arianism of Whiston, and finally to the religion of nature, each of these claiming to represent a more primitive belief than its predecessor, just as the new Parliamentary government claimed, and not without truth, to be a restoration of ancient English liberty. Thus deism admirably fulfilled the requirements of a people who in the midst of revolutions still remained conservative and cautious.

More than this, though essentially rationalistic, though exhibiting the destructive action of reason on religious belief with more self-confidence, more continuity, more concerted effort, and over a wider social area than had ever before been reached, deism gave European thought what it had not yet acquired, a positive centre, a rallying-point for the great revolt against supernatural religion which had long been in preparation, but which had so far remained without seriousness, cohesion, and lucidity. France had long been fermenting, to a higher degree even than England, with freethought;[1] but the equivocal name of libertinism betrayed its association with free-living; and the inability of its professors to advance beyond mere negation is well illustrated by the meagre creed of Molière's Don Juan, that 'two and two make four.' Bayle's Dictionary, with its curious mixture of scandalous anecdotes, miscellaneous erudition, and despairing scepticism, illustrates, without really enlarging, the libertine point of view. English deism supplied just the small nucleus which Continental thought needed before it could crystallise into a solid mass. And the process was powerfully aided by the classical traditions, still more tenacious in France than in England—thanks partly to Jesuit teaching—which clustered round the magnetic name of Cicero.

Historians often speak as if the deistic movement proved a failure in the land of its birth. Failure, no doubt, there was: but whether the movement failed in England or England in the movement is another question. The first

[1] F. T. Perrens, 'Les Libertins en France au XVII^ième^ Siècle' (Paris, 1899).

generation of freethinkers left no successors; and during a lapse of fifty years no rationalist of any originality was born on English soil. Even in their palmiest days the naturalist school found themselves opposed by nearly the whole intellect of the country; while the few men of eminence who sympathised with them observed a cautious silence. Far different was the distribution of forces abroad; far different in England itself at a later epoch. But, as has already been pointed out, this hostility went along with a general indifference to or incapacity for the higher reason as manifested in philosophy, science, history, and the better sort of criticism. By 1739 interest in philosophy had sunk so low among a people once famous for their deep thinking[1] that Hume's 'Treatise on Human Nature,' perhaps the greatest work of its kind ever written by a native of these islands, 'fell dead-born from the press'; and at a later period its author complained bitterly of the stupidity of English society. England could only regain her lost intellectual position by contact with countries where speculation had been kindled by the study of her own literature and science—Scotland, France, and Germany.

The single-minded, almost fanatical enthusiasm with which the deists devoted themselves to attacks on Revelation and to the inculcation of natural religion is unique in history. As a consequence of this sectarian attitude, they lived on the creed they criticised and shared the decline of its vitality. Their position, in fact, very much resembled that of the hero of one of Hauff's fairy tales, who has always as much money in his pockets as the gamester against whom he habitually plays, and consequently finds himself penniless at the moment of complete success. Rationalism could make no further progress until it became associated with the general interests of advancing knowledge, with the enjoyment of beauty, with the cause of suffering humanity. The exercise of reason had to be legitimated by positive conquests before it was extended to every sphere of mental activity.

Not that the isolation of freethought had ever been complete even in England. At the very beginning of the movement Shaftesbury had contributed largely to its credit by combining high culture with a criticism of theology rather implied than

[1] 'Les Anglais pensent profondément' (La Fontaine).

direct. It acquired a certain reflected lustre from the poetry of Pope, and a more doubtful distinction from the versatile accomplishments of Bolingbroke. Finally, it won the co-operation, though but for a strictly limited purpose, of Middleton's classical scholarship and eminent controversial ability. Their support, no doubt, told for what it was worth. But such gleams of patronage were only faint announcements of the formidable alliances which were soon to take the field.

Apart from its intellectual influence on Scotland and the Continent, English deism is not generally credited with any positive action on civilisation, or, if any, it is merely with having contributed more or less to the public and private demoralisation of the times—an accusation brought against rationalism wherever it gains a considerable following, and one which may more profitably be considered when societies where religious belief remains unshaken are shown to be distinguished by their superior purity. A much more probable result of the movement may be found, first, in the permanent establishment of toleration for Dissent in England, and then in the victory, for a long period, of rational religion within the orthodox communions, together with the formation of that most valuable body, the Unitarians. These, as is well known, represent the English Presbyterians of the Stuart period, driven out of the Church by the Act of Conformity, and left free to determine their own destiny, unfettered by articles or creeds. How far such a degree of religious liberty would have been enjoyed had not Collins and others raised a timely protest against the reactionary tendencies under Queen Anne may well be doubted.

But still greater services than these remain to be recorded. Under George II. we hear about one of those Romeward tendencies which seem to be a recurring phenomenon in English history.[1] In the Stuart period a similar movement was met and overcome by the Latitudinarians. Within our own memory, as will hereafter be shown, a similar but more

[1] See the references to Middleton given above. An 'alarm about the increase of Popery which prevailed about the end of the year 1734' (1735 N.S.) induced Neal, the historian of Puritanism, and other eminent Dissenting ministers to preach against the errors of Rome (Toulmin's 'Life of Neal,' prefixed to his edition of the History, p. xxiv. in the reprint of 1822).

formidable movement has been met and overcome by modern rationalism. And if there really was something like it in the age of Queen Caroline, we may fairly infer that it was met and overcome by arguments which cut the ground from under all appeals to authority or to superstitious terror.

Finally, among results due to the spread of rationalism, we have to reckon the conquest of India. This was facilitated, or perhaps only made possible, by what a modern historian calls 'the religious indifference' of the conquerors, who extended a boundless toleration to every variety of Hindoo faith, offering in this respect a marked contrast to the Portuguese settlers, who carried their Inquisition with them into the East.[1] Such a policy must, to say the least of it, have been suggested and encouraged by the lessons of Collins and Tindal. And so strongly did the tradition of indifference become established, that the fanatical demand for a more active propagation of Christianity, raised at the time of the Sepoy Mutiny, found no response among the governing classes of England.[2]

Still these services, although great, were, what the creed of the freethinkers passed for being, purely negative, and therefore failed to raise their cause in public estimation. Although nobody seemed disposed to controvert Tindal's assertion that society had not improved since the days of Tiberius, there was a general feeling, shared by some of the deists themselves, that in the absence of supernatural restraints it would become much worse. As to the investigation of truth for its own sake, it had at that time lost all interest for the English mind. Instead of 'musing, searching, revolving new notions and new ideas,' it was musing, searching, revolving new sources of profit or of pelf.

Elsewhere the case was different. In Scotland, France, and Germany the liveliest intellectual curiosity had been awakened, and there was the strongest desire to carry the methods of the previous century into new fields of enquiry, or to use them for the furtherance of human happiness. There was, indeed, more room for such generous efforts among our neighbours than among ourselves. In France arbitrary power and religious fanaticism had within recent memory made themselves jointly

[1] Goldwin Smith, 'The United Kingdom,' Vol. II., p. 412.

[2] The Mutiny itself is said to have been partly provoked by the injudicious propagandism of Evangelical officers.

responsible for one of the most barbarous acts of persecution ever recorded in history; besides which, from the long and intimate connexion existing between the French monarchy and the Roman Catholic Church, Christianity had to bear the blame for every abuse in the administration of the most Christian king. Neither in Scotland nor in Germany were such abuses known, or, if known, they were not resented, or, if resented, not associated with a false religion. But the gloomy tyranny of the Kirk did not endear its creed to educated Scotchmen, nor did the sanctimonious hypocrisy of all classes recommend it any more to their favour; while in Germany the great Pietistic movement, very useful at first as a solvent of the rigid lifeless old Lutheran orthodoxy, was itself degenerating into a sour and narrow-minded asceticism, capable, as appeared in the expulsion of Wolf from Halle, of reviving the old intolerance in a particularly mean and spiteful form.[1]

On the mass of combustible materials so prepared in the surrounding countries, the fire of English rationalism, deprived of air and fuel in its first home, fell and spread with an impulse quickened by the very causes which in this country opposed themselves to its continued propagation. While the weight of English intellect had been thrown against infidelity in England, abroad it was thrown into the same scale. The discoveries of a Newton and a Locke, the charm of an Addison, the power of a Swift, the dazzling paradoxes of a Berkeley, gave additional prestige to every doctrine emanating from the world's great centre of illumination; and so far from being a quantity subtracted from the persuasiveness of the deistic movement, they became co-efficients to its energy of expansion. And that immunity from the evils of religious discord, of persecution, of superstition, and of asceticism, which made the demand for freedom of enquiry seem superfluous or impertinent to the countrymen of Collins and Tindal, excited the emulous admiration of less fortunate communities, kindling a desire to naturalise among themselves the same hardihood of criticism, the same subjection of all creeds and all institutions, whatever their origin, whatever their age, whatever their diffusion, whatever their authority, to the one universally applicable standard of reason.

[1] Zeller's 'Vorträge und Abhandlungen,' I., 6.

CHAPTER IV

RATIONALISM IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

WHAT the English deists had left undone in the way of negative criticism was speedily completed by their immediate successors, among whom we at once encounter the two greatest names in the history of rationalism, Voltaire and Hume. No other assailants have so successfully applied reason to the destruction of religious belief. No others have exercised so profound an influence on public opinion, Voltaire on the opinion of the masses, Hume on the opinion of the *élite*. The one practically put an end to persecution, the other theoretically put an end to dogmatism. A great rationalist of our own time has observed that Voltaire did more for humanity than all the Fathers of the Church put together. He might have added, with at least equal truth, that Hume did more for thought than all the Schoolmen put together.

In personal character the two offered a signal contrast, on which this is not the place to dilate. Let it suffice to say that the one was as distinguished for his fiery restlessness as the other for his steady and even stolid placidity; and that if in Voltaire this restlessness went with vices from which Hume was wholly free, it also went with virtues to which Hume made no approach. It is more interesting to note the essential reasonableness which distinguished both in life as well as in thought. In Hume's case this is too notorious to need illustration. In Voltaire's case it seems a paradox, but a paradox which will be much attenuated if we understand by reasonableness, not the limitation of our desires, but the setting before ourselves of ideals which may be and are fulfilled. Voltaire's ideals may not have been the highest, but they were fulfilled. He sought for wealth, for fame, for power, and they were given

him in the amplest measure. If he did not succeed in destroying Christianity, he did more towards turning it into a religion of humanity than any other man has ever done or can ever hope to do.

The thing that he most hated and that he primarily wished to overthrow was Catholicism, and he struck at this through its Scriptural foundation. A notion has long been sedulously propagated among ourselves that attacks on Christianity, as commonly understood in Protestant countries, and more particularly attacks on Biblical authority, leave the position of the Roman Catholic Church untouched. It is built, we are told, on other foundations, and commands more summary methods of conviction than are supplied by a laborious sifting and comparison of Scriptural texts. Recent utterances of the Roman hierarchy hardly go to confirm this belief; nor is it countenanced, I believe, by Roman Catholic theologians. At any rate, it receives no support from Voltaire, who ought to have known something about the matter, having been brought up by the Jesuits, one of whom, by the way, predicted his future apostasy. Cicero and Bayle would probably, in any circumstances, have made him a freethinker; but in point of fact his attacks on Christianity were conducted on the lines of English rationalism, with which he had become familiarised in the course of a long residence in England. He also accepted the positive deism of his English masters, basing it, in common with nearly all his contemporaries, on the argument from final causes, together with the ophelistic argument that morality needs the sanction of belief in a divine providence; though how he reconciled this theology with his absolute rejection of miracles, his cynical pessimism, his doubts about a future life, and his final adherence to determinism, does not appear. A remunerating and avenging Deity who rigidly abstains from interfering with the action of second causes, and who cannot in justice requite the soul—if there be a soul—for deeds performed when in the body by his own decree, seems to offer uncertain securities for the good behaviour of his devotees.

But if Voltaire was weak and incoherent in construction, as a negative critic he had the art of making all the resources at his disposal tell to the utmost of their value. The desultory attacks of his English predecessors are with him organised into

one vast plan of campaign, clear, complete, and systematic. Agile, well equipped, but without an ounce of superfluous accoutrements, his troops are flung again and again in swarming masses on the citadels of faith, and reinforced from inexhaustible reserves. All science, all history, all contemporary life, are pressed into the service. Morality, philosophy, public order, and even public decency, are arrayed against revealed religion. Poetry, epic, dramatic, and lyric, contributes fanfaronades of military music; while some gay and sparkling story at once leads on, refreshes, and cheers the assailants, as French storming columns advance against a battery with their *vivandière* riding at their head.[1]

Voltaire was everything, even original. Not only does he bring together with irresistible effect all the arguments current at his time that go to prove the late date of the Pentateuch, but he adds to them another of his own discovery. I refer to the now famous passage where Amos declares, as a well-known fact, that sacrifices to Iahveh were not offered by Israel in the wilderness. This, which now supplies the Higher Criticism with one of its strongest proofs of the late date of the Levitical Code, is, as Professor James Darmesteter has pointed out, first cited for that purpose in a work attributed by Voltaire to Lord Bolingbroke, but really written by himself and published in 1767.[2] Here and elsewhere we observe the note of a genuine historian who, even if inaccurate and superficial, had acquired the art of weighing evidence and of bringing apparently remote facts into mutual relation.

The same remark applies to Hume. So high does the reputation as an original thinker of that great writer now stand, that his merits as a historian are either forgotten or remembered only to be vilified. In the admirable volume on Hume contributed by Professor Huxley to the series of 'English Men of Letters,' not a single word of criticism is vouchsafed to his 'History of England,' even considered as a literary composition. And it may be that the work in question deserves all the hard things that have been said of it by Freeman and others. Nevertheless, it remains true that no philosopher since Aristotle has

[1] Hamley's 'War in the Crimea,' p. 251.

[2] 'Examen Important de Milord Bolingbroke,' Chap. V., note; Amos, v. 25–6.

been so well read in history as Hume, nor any so well qualified to bring his historical studies into fruitful relation with the sciences of human nature.

This appears especially in Hume's solitary contribution to the criticism of revealed religion, the famous 'Essay on Miracles,' published in 1748. In it the question is for the first time treated as a whole, and treated purely as a matter of experience. Previous discussions had either concerned themselves with the probability of particular occurrences, like the essays of Woolston and Middleton, or had involved certain assumptions about the divine attributes, as with Spinoza and Butler. Hume takes in the whole range of history, ancient and modern, but he assumes nothing, knows nothing about God. The very business of miracles, if such occurrences there be, is to tell us something we did not know before and could not have known without their aid about the supernatural world. Now, experience makes us acquainted with a natural order, unbroken except by the alleged miraculous exceptions. In the recorded cases we believe them, if at all, on human testimony. But experience shows that such testimony may be fallacious, and that it is particularly liable to error where the witnesses believe themselves to be reporting supernatural events. And experience also shows that the general judgment of mankind agrees in this depreciatory estimate of testimony to miracles. For those reported as having been wrought in confirmation of incredible doctrines are themselves summarily dismissed as incredible. On this point Hume could appeal to very recent experience. He had the advantage of some years' residence in France, a country still exposed to such performances. Jansenists and Jesuits could both quote signs and wonders in attestation of their respective pretensions, and neither party would take the other's evidence as trustworthy; while Protestants extended an equal scepticism to both. Similarly all religions have their miracles, and none find credence outside the limits of the communion whose teaching they support. Thus Hume has the majority of mankind with him in refusing to believe a miracle on any evidence that may be produced on its behalf. It is always more probable that the witnesses were deceived than that the alleged violation of natural order occurred.

We must observe that for an event to be inexplicable does

not necessarily make it a miracle. It must, in Hume's words, be a transgression of a law of nature by 'a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of an invisible agent.'[1] And from a rationalistic point of view the definition is adequate; for only as such does the alleged miracle possess evidentiary value. Let us suppose that the persons who were cured of various diseases at the tomb of the Abbé Paris were simply hysterical patients, and that they were cured by suggestion. In that case the credit of the witnesses would be partially saved, but the supposed supernatural testimony to the orthodoxy of Jansenism would disappear. I say that the credit of the witnesses would be partially saved, for they would still be deceived to the extent of mistaking the nature of the disease. And that is all that Hume's argument requires. His statement of it may be too strong, but substantially it remains unshaken.

It has been objected that for Hume to talk about 'laws of nature' was inconsistent with his sceptical, phenomenist philosophy. That is a purely personal question, the decision of which leaves the argument from relative probabilities unaffected. Indeed, as a contribution to rationalism, Hume's 'Essay' gains in value by not being mixed up with his philosophy, whatever that may be worth. In this respect he has a great advantage over Spinoza, the typical rationalist of the seventeenth century. Spinoza said that miracles were impossible; and so they would be if his philosophy were true, for then there would be no agent capable of performing them. But it is open to an apologist to reply that he does not agree with Spinoza; and, indeed, no one can agree with him without ceasing to be a Christian.

The denial of a personal God under any form, Spinoza's or another's, includes the denial of miracles as the greater includes the less. On the other hand, a deist of Tindal's school is not debarred by the creed of natural religion from adopting Hume's position. Assuming that God might, if he pleased, interfere with the course of nature, experience shows that as a rule he does not so please, and therefore it establishes the *a priori* probability against miracles, denied by Butler.

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. II., p. 93.

Whether Hume himself did or did not belong to that school is still a moot point. But he certainly attacks natural religion with a vigour never before displayed in theological controversy; and his writings on the subject constitute his most important contribution to rationalistic literature.

Here, again, we must abstract from the personal question. Whether Hume had or had not any religious belief is a problem which may interest his biographer: it does not interest us. He gives us to understand over and over again that he is a theist. But, then, all the freethinkers professed to be Christians, and for that matter Hume himself calls Christianity 'our religion.' In point of fact he gives the antitheistic speaker in his Dialogues the best of the argument, and behind his arguments we have no business to go. It matters nothing if the authority even of so great a man was thrown against their conclusiveness, for we have to deal, not with authority, but with reason; or, if opinions as such are to have any importance, we have to do less with Hume than with his followers, and they took the antitheistic side.

Like all the great masters of dialectic, Hume, so far as possible, takes common ground with his opponents. He had pursued this course in his 'Essay on Miracles,' he pursues it again in his still more wonderful writings on natural religion. Since reasoning on the subject first began, most persons, when they felt bound to give a reason for believing in the existence of a personal God, have assumed that there must be an intelligent cause of the world. Now, to those who accept Hume's analysis of causation such an assumption is fallacious. Our only guide is experience, and experience only tells us that within the world every change is preceded by another change. As to the world itself, we know and can know nothing about a time when it did not exist; we have, therefore, no right to dogmatise about the mode of its production. But when Hume is writing about natural religion, he accepts, without analysis, the ordinary notion of causation, insisting only on a rigid adherence to experience in its application. Applying this principle to theology, he argues that, granting the world to have been created by a designing intelligence, we are not justified in ascribing any intentions to its creator other than what are actually realised in the visible constitution of things. If nature

and history testify to a certain degree of justice and beneficence in the distribution of pleasure and pain, then we may, to that extent, credit the author of nature with justice and beneficence, but only to that extent and no more. If on examination inequalities of fortune, irreconcilable with our notions of morality, should reveal themselves, we have no right to infer that God's original intentions have been frustrated, to imagine that the present order of things was preceded by a golden age, or that it will be followed by another dispensation where what we consider perfect justice shall prevail. By such reasoning we should 'have certainly added something to the attributes of the cause beyond what appears in the effect.'[1] The flimsy edifices of the Christian apologist and of his deistic opponent come down together like a house of cards at a single push.

But this whole theory of a creative intelligence must be abandoned as gratuitous. It rests almost entirely on final causes, on what is known as the argument from design. Here Voltaire agrees with Butler, and both with the German disciples of Wolf. The structure of organised bodies shows, it is alleged, an adaptation of means to ends surpassing the most exquisite workmanship of human skill, and must therefore have proceeded from a more than human intelligence. Hume does not dispute the premiss, but he denies the inference. In order to the construction of a material system consisting of parts with mutually related uses, it is not enough, as he points out, to assume a mind of absolute simplicity. The complexity of the cause must equal the complexity of the effect. The mechanical system presupposes a system of ideas related to one another and exhibiting marks of design to precisely the same extent. But 'a mental world or universe of ideas requires a cause as much as does a material world, or universe of objects; and, if similar in arrangement, must require a similar cause;'[2] and so on *ad infinitum*. If we stop anywhere, 'why not stop at the material world,' and credit it with a spontaneous power of self-adjustment to immanent ends? The method of the teleologists is no better than that of the Indian sage with his elephant and tortoise, or the peripatetic explanation of the

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. II., p. 115.

[2] 'A Treatise on Human Nature and Dialogues concerning Natural Religion,' Vol. II., p. 407.

action of bodies by their occult qualities.[1] As Hume had destroyed the religious idea of an ultimate purpose in nature by arguing that causes must not be assumed to exceed their effects, so conversely he destroys the religious idea of a creator by arguing that causes must be assumed to equal their effects.

Teleology is the most popular but not the sole foundation of theistic philosophy. Plato, Aristotle, and the Schoolmen had inferred the existence of God from the fact that matter moves, combined with the supposed inability of matter to move itself. It must then have been set going in the first instance by mind. But since their time modern science had intervened, and on the strength of its discoveries Hume urges that motion may conceivably have been started by the original forces of matter just as well as by mind; or, as an alternative, that 'motion may have been propagated by impulse through all eternity, and the same stock of it, or nearly the same (*sic*), be still upheld in the universe.'[2] As to the order of nature, it is permanent because it is stable; whereas a disorderly arrangement is bound by its very instability to fall to pieces, making way for another and another, until at length a position of stable equilibrium—to use language more modern than Hume's—has been attained.

Here we have under its most general expression the doctrine of which the survival of the fittest in biology is only a particular case. It seems to have been borrowed by Hume from the 'Lettres sur les Aveugles' of his illustrious contemporary, Diderot; and as employed by Diderot it may be more appropriately called a reminiscence of Greek philosophy than an anticipation of Darwin.

Another theistic argument is derived from what is called in scholastic language the contingency of the world. A chain of finite causes and effects cannot be conceived except as originating in that which necessarily exists, which has the reason of its existence in itself, and cannot be conceived as non-existing. Now, this necessary Being is what we call God. Hume replies, first, that the whole idea of a necessarily existent Being is fictitious,—for whatever can be conceived as existing can equally be conceived as non-existing; and, secondly, that, granting the alleged necessity, matter may, for anything we

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 408-9. [2] P. 426.

know to the contrary, have a reason for its existence in itself.[1] Hume does not seem to have been acquainted with Spinoza; otherwise he might have quoted that philosopher's system to show how readily the ontological argument lends itself to the denial of a personal God—a truth still more fully exemplified in the next century by the far subtler dialectic of Hegel.

Finally, Hume enters at length on the sentimental grounds of religious belief, the helpless longing for an ideal source of justice and love amid the hardships and miseries of our present life.[2] But as against these he has merely to repeat his old principle, that from an imperfect effect a perfect cause cannot necessarily be inferred.[3] The moral argument for theism, the interpretation of conscience as a direct self-revelation of God to the soul, had apparently not yet been put forward, or had been forgotten when he wrote. But we can tell from his 'Moral Essays' how he would have dealt with it. Conscience, we can imagine him saying, is not a supernatural revelation, but a natural growth, an instinctive feeling of sympathy or antipathy towards certain classes of actions or sentiments, generated in the individual by accumulated experiences of their utility or of their danger to the race.

Berkeley was Hume's master in metaphysics; and it is rather remarkable that his new argument for theism, derived from the idealistic theory of human knowledge, should nowhere be mentioned in the 'Dialogues concerning Natural Religion.' Apparently neither theologians nor their opponents had begun to take it seriously. At any rate, Hume's own philosophy supplies the answer. To refute Berkeley we need only push his method a little further. If a material substratum for phenomena be a gratuitous assumption, so also is a spiritual substratum. Experience is silent, and equally silent, about both. Phenomena, or, as Berkeley and Hume call them, ideas, fall into natural classes, and are determined in their occurrence by natural laws. Anything else, call it substance or what you will, is a fiction, less amusing than the novels avowedly put forward as such.

After destroying the logical foundations of religious belief, Hume undermines its authority by studying it as a natural

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 431 *sqq.* [2] P. 435. [3] P. 441.

growth. In opposition alike to freethinkers and orthodox believers he represents spiritualistic monotheism as the outcome of a gradual development, beginning with low forms of idolatry and rooted in the tendency to animate material objects with human life and consciousness. After long holding the field, this theory has in the last half-century been violently attacked from various quarters, but no satisfactory substitute has yet been agreed on, and the general principle on which it rests seems again to be finding favour with scientific mythologists.

With Hume's 'Essay on Miracles' and his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion' the high-water mark of rationalism was reached in the eighteenth century, as it had been reached in the seventeenth with Spinoza's 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus' and his 'Ethica'; nor has it since been carried any further on lines of abstract thought. Historical criticism on the one hand and physical science on the other have contributed an enormous amount of detailed verification, but have not in any respect enlarged the scope of Hume's abstract reasonings. Being, however, not merely abstract but also purely sceptical or negative, and out of relation to practical interests, his anti-theistic arguments seem to have done less execution than might have been expected from their author's great philosophical reputation and the singular charm of his style. Like all such publications, the 'Dialogues' must also have suffered by not appearing during their author's life. It is a striking instance of the power exercised by personal authority that arguments should count for less because the intellect to which we owe them is extinct; yet most people will, I think, find on self-examination that the death even of a favourite writer involves a measurable depreciation in his hold on their allegiance. However this may be, it is certain that the contemporary atheistic materialism of France and Germany,[1] though set forth with incomparably less literary and dialectical ability, acted far more powerfully on public opinion than Hume's criticism. That rationalism should be popularly identified with materialism shows, indeed, how much materialism has contributed to its diffusion. The doctrine that mind was evolved from the interplay of molecular forces and that we think with our brains

[1] I include Germany on account of D'Holbach, who was a German.

may not be logically defensible; but to the vulgar it seems much more conceivable than any form of idealism, and it appeals to their standard of evidence through the support it seems to receive from what they call hard facts. With the French Encyclopaedists it took over the part played by the equally plausible and popular creed of deism among the earlier school of freethinkers, and, like that, represented the resumption of an old classical tradition in violent reaction against the established Oriental religion rather than any influence derived from modern science. Its adherents drew on Epicurus and Lucretius as their predecessors had drawn on the Stoics and Cicero.

Historically, the revival of materialism was nearly contemporary with the revival of natural religion, having been begun by Gassendi in France and Hobbes in England; though neither of those philosophers carried it, at least openly, to the length of atheism. Checked for a time by the predominance of the Cartesians, with their supposed demonstration of the soul as a separate spiritual substance, it received new strength from the subsequent ascendency of Locke and his school. Locke himself saw no reason for doubting that God could, if he pleased, endow matter with the power to think; and his derivation of all knowledge from the simple sensations and their combinations seemed to point in that direction. True, the most elementary feeling can no more be explained by the movements of the bodily organs than can the most refined and complicated act of reasoning; while the association with nervous action is probably not less intimate in the latter than in the former manifestation of mind. Still, the fact remains that sensation is common to us with the lower animals, while reason and all that depends on it is supposed to be peculiar to ourselves; and this distinction seems to be imperilled by a psychology whose object is to break down the old line of demarcation between the two. It will be called materialism, however much its adherents may protest against the name. And as theologians only object to materialism in so far as it excludes immortality, their impatience of idealistic subtleties is quite intelligible. Their inaccuracy becomes less inexcusable when they take advantage of the confusion between sensationalism and sensualism, or between materialism in philosophy and materialism in life, to

insinuate that their opponents encourage a predilection for vulgar and vicious enjoyments.

In France materialism became the reigning doctrine among the majority of those whose primary object was political and social reform. They believed that in advocating it they were advocating the truth: but for truth in the abstract they had little enthusiasm. In attacking spiritualism they attacked religion, and in attacking religion they attacked both the intolerance for which it was directly responsible and the political abuses which it indirectly fostered. Hume, on the other hand, was in politics a Tory; and although no friend to abuses, his alienation from the popular cause, which the experience of the civil wars led him to associate with religious fanaticism, did not recommend his agnostic rationalism to the revolutionary party; while his absolutist friends would be debarred from accepting it, at least openly, by their traditional alliance with the Church. Nevertheless, it was from the future chiefs of English radicalism that his reputation with posterity was to come; and the triumphant reception given him by the leaders of advanced thought in Paris showed a just appreciation of the consequences to which, whatever might be their superficial aspect, his speculations would eventually lead.

The name of Gibbon is constantly and justly associated with that of Hume in the history of rationalism. Although born and bred in England, the Roman historian was hardly more of an Englishman than the Scotch philosopher, and, like him, stands quite outside the English movement of thought, his affinities being rather with the French school. The best part of his mental training was received at Lausanne, virtually a French city, and his first intention was to write his great work in the French language. Moreover, his intense interest in theological and ecclesiastical questions, though primarily an outgrowth of the old English tradition, would probably have withered amid the general indifference of English public opinion to such topics after 1750, had it not been sustained and stimulated by the intellectual climate in which his later years were spent.

Gibbon's contribution to rationalism, thorough and solid so far as it goes, ranks far below Hume's in weight. His famous

fifteenth and sixteenth chapters are in substance a reply to the apologetic contention that the conquest of the Roman empire by Christianity was itself a miracle, an event only to be explained by supernatural intervention. Gibbon showed that this revolution could be sufficiently accounted for by the unaided operation of natural causes. More particularly he proved that the obstacles to its achievement had been enormously exaggerated in a controversial interest. Before Diocletian the persecutions were very partial in their incidence; and at no time was the number of martyrs great.[1] At last the new religion was forcibly imposed on the empire by a small minority, to whom Constantine and his successors gave, for political reasons, a somewhat compromising support.

To say that such arguments do not account for the first origin of Christianity would be irrelevant. That was not the historian's problem; and he might have observed that the materials for solving it did not exist. The unexplained is not necessarily identical with the inexplicable, nor the inexplicable with the supernatural. Otherwise we should soon be overburdened with miracles, not always to the advantage of any one system of theology. Within the limits assigned by himself, Gibbon, if he has not exhausted the subject, has at any rate made a good beginning; and the effect of subsequent enquiry has been to strengthen the naturalistic case—so much so, indeed, that the difficulty is not now to explain the ultimate success of Christianity, but to explain why its success was so long delayed.

D'Holbach's 'System of Nature,' the most complete compendium of atheistic materialism ever written, appeared in 1770, twenty years after the composition of Hume's 'Dialogues,' which, however, did not see the light until 1776, the year of his death. But in the mean time a formidable counter-movement had already begun. That great theological revival which signalised the first decades of the nineteenth century all over Western Europe is generally ascribed to a violent reaction against the excesses of the French Revolution and the subversive opinions vulgarly supposed to have produced them. But the Revolution only served to quicken a movement which

[1] This estimate has since been confirmed by Friedländer.

had begun long before, and which was rapidly approaching its maturity when the States General were convoked. Like the Romanticism with which it afterwards became intimately associated, the religious reaction had its roots far back in the eighteenth century. In common with other outbreaks of a similar character before and after it, this movement does not primarily indicate a change of opinion among the leaders of thought, but an increased prominence given to the ideas of the people, of those who live by petty commerce and manual labour, that is of the most numerous, the most unjustly treated, the most enthusiastic, the most unreasoning, and the most ignorant section of the community. The psychology of this class can be better studied, before the Revolution, in England than in any other European country. We find them cheering for Sacheverell under Queen Anne, driving Walpole against his better judgment into an impolitic war with Spain, falling into convulsions round Wesley's pulpit, shrieking for Byng's execution, equally ardent in their worship of Chatham and of Wilkes, turning London into a pandemonium as a protest against the partial repeal of Catholic disabilities, and burning Priestley's books and scientific instruments, at about the same time when the chosen representatives of their French brethren were sending Lavoisier to the guillotine. Perhaps the reputation for ferocity enjoyed by our countrymen at that time among the other nations of Europe arose, at least in part, from the greater liberty allowed to the populace in England. The events of the Revolution proved that much greater ferocity could be displayed by the same class in France when it once got out of hand.

Along with this increasing influence of the people there was coming into play the influence of another class, still more noted for the strength of its so-called religious instincts, that is, the whole female sex. The prominence given to ideals of gentleness and affectionate domesticity all through the eighteenth century, whether related to it as cause or effect, proves that women were coming to count for much more than in the days of Shakespeare and Milton, when, to judge from repeated utterances of those poets, the general estimate of their capacities stood at the lowest point it has ever fallen to in the civilised world. Freethought unquestionably made many converts among women—not always, if contemporary novelists may be trusted,

to the benefit of their morals: but taking them as a body, their permanent relations with children present a sufficient guarantee for the steadiness of their religious beliefs.

Now, by a singular coincidence, it happened that the greatest writer of the third quarter of the century was in close touch with both these classes. Rousseau sprang from the people, and sympathised with the people through life. He had also associated very intimately with women, and entered into their sentiments more deeply than any of his contemporaries, as they in turn were ardently devoted to him. True, he was no feminist in the modern sense, and his estimate of their position in reference to men is depreciatory;[1] but the passive part assigned to them in his ideal community would suggest anything rather than a relaxation of the religious sanction.

At the same time, Rousseau was no mere eloquent sentimentalist. The strength of his logical understanding was on a level with his declamatory power: his command of the dialectical weapons is not less remarkable than his mastery of human passion. Thus, while calling himself a Christian,[2] he professes Christianity under a rationalised form, without original sin and without miracles. Indeed, personally, he provoked clerical hostility to a much greater extent, and with consequences far more disastrous to himself, than his more freethinking contemporaries. But this very fact suggests that the Catholic bishops and Protestant pastors who hounded him from one retreat to another, saw and dreaded in the author of the 'Emile' what the Encyclopaedists were not—a rival religious teacher. And such in truth Rousseau is entitled to be called. His position first marks the distinction, since become familiar, between Theism and Deism.

The name of deist, though cherished by Shaftesbury for its positive meaning, had in practice come to connote the mere rejection of revealed religion, so that the common phrase, a deist *and* an atheist, could be used without any consciousness of absurdity. Theist, on the other hand, emphasises the belief in a personal God—that at least, if no more. And the name at once classes those who bear it with more orthodox believers, as against agnostics, pantheists, and atheists. To put the

[1] See the part about Sophie in his 'Emile.'

[2] 'Lettres de la Montagne,' p. 227 ('Oeuvres,' Tome VI. Paris, 1823).

distinction figuratively, Rousseau stands nearly on the same line of latitude as Voltaire, but while the one faces south the other faces north. The one is a connecting link between Bossuet and Diderot; the other is a connecting link between Diderot and Chateaubriand, as his disciple Robespierre paved the way by his feast of the Supreme Being from the Goddess of Reason to the Concordat.

Ethically, also, his sympathies are with the Gospel rather than with the Graeco-Roman moralists. It alone, he declares, is in morals always safe, always true, always unique, and always like itself.[1] Here there is a note of the coming Romantic school, with which Rousseau is also connected by his worship of nature.

But Rousseau's Christianity, like that of the modern Unitarians—and of many liberal Churchmen who do not call themselves Unitarians—is without dogmas and without miracles. Indeed, his discussion of miracles as evidences is one of the most powerful and convincing arguments in the whole literature of the subject, and the more so because it appeals directly to the refusal of Jesus himself to authenticate his mission by a sign.

By language, association, and direct political influence, Rousseau belongs to the emancipating French literature of the eighteenth century. But as a Genevese, a Protestant, and an enthusiast for Alpine scenery, he attracted the sympathies of the Teutonic nations more than any writer of Catholic France. If he was a link between Diderot and Chateaubriand, he was also a link between the older rationalism and the great literary and philosophic movement of modern Germany. Any attempt at reconciliation between the new spirit and the old was from the nature of things sure to win German attention and imitation. From her geographical position Germany is a predestined mediator between opposing trends of thought as between divergent types of civilisation. And history, in this instance a product of geographical conditions, has come to complete what geography began. Her political and religious disunion has long made unity in all orders of activity the fondly cherished ideal of her foremost minds, but a unity which itself must be united

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 224.

with individuality. Her very language, with its Teutonic vocabulary and Latin structure, aptly illustrates the national tendency—a tendency sometimes wholly chimerical, as when Leibniz made advances to Bossuet for a reunion of Protestantism with Rome, or wholly grotesque, as when old Friedrich Wilhelm taught his subjects to love him by caning those who fled at his approach. Its most serious and lasting result has been the doctrine of historical evolution.

Rationalism made its way into Germany very early in the century by a number of different routes.[1] Spinoza, Bayle, and the English deists were widely read. Wolf, while systematising the philosophy of Leibniz, quietly receded from his master's rather equivocal association with orthodox Protestantism; and, without absolutely rejecting miracles, made the credibility of their occurrence depend on a number of conditions which never had been, and were never likely to be, fulfilled.[2] The Pietists contrived by a most discreditable court-intrigue to drive Wolf from his professorship at Halle; but Pietism itself tended to loosen the solid framework of Lutheran orthodoxy; and its adherents occasionally leaned in the direction of rationalism.[3] Subsequently the long and glorious reign of Frederick, himself an avowed freethinker, helped to secure a degree of religious toleration unknown to any other great European state. Hence the conflict between reason and religion, elsewhere the cause of so much bitter party feeling, was thought out rather than fought out in the German universities. Here, for the first time, the love of truth for its own sake had a principal share in carrying on an enquiry which, after all, had the investigation of truth for its avowed object. The result might be pleasant or it might be painful; but the difference to men's feelings no more affected its scientific determination than the value of an interesting patient's life affects the diagnosis of his physician.

Still, even in Germany, complete intellectual sincerity as regards religion had at first to contend with formidable difficulties, and has seldom been perfectly realised. Of these some were created by public opinion, while others of a more insidious character were due to the mental constitution of the enquirers

[1] For this whole subject the best authority known to me is Hettner's 'Litteraturgeschichte.'

[2] Kuno Fischer, 'Geschichte der neuern Philosophie,' Bd. III., pp. 636–8.

[3] Ritschl, 'Geschichte des Pietismus,' Bd. III., pp. 173–4.

themselves. Foremost among the latter was the synthetic tendency, already referred to, of German thought, taking the form of an extreme unwillingness to give up any element of belief that has been long and widely entertained. It may be absorbed into a higher truth; but at a certain stage of development it stands for the whole truth, and for such as have not yet risen above that stage it remains the most helpful definition of the world in relation to themselves.

The first to give currency to this view was Lessing, who is therefore justly revered by his countrymen as the founder not only of their modern literature, but also of their distinctive religious philosophy. Unfortunately, as a consequence of his relative conservatism and respect for long-established creeds, Lessing never gave the public a complete account of his own religious opinions. If the reports of his friends are to be trusted, he was, at least towards the close of his life, a declared Spinozist; though whether he adopted the system of the great Jewish pantheist in all its details does not appear. His famous essay on the 'Education of the Human Race,' written shortly before his death, assumes throughout personality and providence as attributes of God in a way inconsistent not only with Spinoza's teaching, but with any logical form of pantheism. This, however, may be an example of that exoteric doctrine which Lessing claimed the liberty of teaching in a world unprepared for the reception of complete and final truth. In evident opposition to the deistic school, sundry reasons—rather strange and fanciful ones—are adduced to account for the restriction of revelation to one small people, not marked out by any particular merit for the privilege of such a distinction. And the imperfections of the revelation itself are similarly justified. Temporal rewards and punishments are defended as a training for the belief in a future life; and the dogma of retribution after death is interpreted as a preparation for the performance of duty from purely disinterested motives. Theological mysteries are not hopeless puzzles: they are anticipatory disclosures of truths which reason will one day discover to be necessary judgments, but could not have discovered at all at the time when they were first revealed. Thus the Trinity is provisionally explained by suggesting that the self-consciousness

of God as a necessarily existent Being involves the reflexion of himself in another Being (the eternal Son) with the same attributes, including personality. Lessing omits to account for the Holy Ghost; but, had he attempted it, his ingenuity would no doubt have been equal to the task. The whole performance concludes with a word for metempsychosis, which is rather inconsistently recommended on the ground of its being the oldest form of religion.

By a curious irony of fate no great German writer has ever come into such violent conflict with the orthodox theologians as Lessing. Towards the middle of the century a German deist of the old school, named Reimarus, but better known to literary history as the Wolfenbüttel Fragmentist, had composed an elaborate attack on Christianity, which he was afraid to publish, but left behind him in manuscript. His family entrusted the book to Lessing, who printed some portions of it, describing them as extracts from an anonymous work discovered by him in the Wolfenbüttel library, of which he was at that time the librarian. One of these extracts dealt with the story of the Resurrection, which Reimarus regarded as a fable, appealing in proof of his opinion to the irreconcilable discrepancies of the four Gospel narratives. Goeze, a Hamburg minister, wrote a reply in the usual style of orthodox apologetics. Lessing thereupon took up the cause of his unnamed author with equal wit and acumen, and, as Goeze returned again and again to the charge, retorted in a series of pamphlets ranking among the greatest masterpieces of controversial literature. From one point of view the result was no more than to bring Germany up to the level long before reached by England and France. But the ulterior effect was to eradicate the notion of Biblical inspiration more thoroughly from men's minds in Germany than anywhere else, and to pave the way for a far more searching criticism of the sacred records than could be practised elsewhere. And Lessing himself was induced partially to abandon his attitude of reserve in matters of religion, much to the benefit of his countrymen, who have had before them ever since, in his drama of 'Nathan the Wise,' such a lesson in rationality as the stage of no other country can supply.

The year of Lessing's death, 1781, is also memorable for

the publication of Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason,' a work avowedly undertaken for the purpose of rehabilitating theism as a philosophical creed. Brought up in the school of Wolf, Kant had subsequently come to abandon that philosopher's old-fashioned spiritualism under the influence of Hume's sceptical criticism. But he retained certain convictions which no criticism could shake, beliefs which might be explained, which could not be explained away. Reared under strict Pietistic influences both at home and at school, he continued through life, even after abandoning Christianity, a Puritan theologian, associating the idea of duty with the idea of God. At the same time, physical studies had familiarised him with the idea of law as not less absolute in the material world than in the sphere of moral obligation, though absolute after another fashion, not as postulated, but as realised. As the first author of the nebular hypothesis he saw the causal chain stretching back unbroken by supernatural interference through ages long anterior to the birth of the solar system. And a true law of causation must also embrace human actions: like all other phenomena, these must be determined by antecedents, must be capable of prediction by a mind acquainted with the necessary elements of calculation, and capable of working out their remotest consequences. Yet, if duty exists at all, as it surely must, it cannot demand impossibilities. What we ought to do we can do, at any sacrifice of our private happiness. In other words, our will must be free while our actions are determined. Here was such an opportunity as the German mind loves of reconciling contradictions in the synthesis of a higher unity.

Hume had pushed to its furthest consequences the principle that all knowledge is derived from experience. It seemed to him to involve the denial of necessary truth, the law of causation included. Within the limits of our observation every event has had a cause, that is to say, it has been preceded by another event, on whose recurrence it will happen again; and by force of habit we expect that a similar connexion will always continue to obtain, as also that it obtained before our experience began, and obtains in all places whither our experience does not reach. But the contrary is equally conceivable. There is no assignable reason why events should succeed one another according to a particular order, or according to any

order whatever. In short, causation is not a necessity, but a fact.

For a time Kant rested content with this sceptical conclusion. His knowledge of mathematics, however, convinced him at last that there might be something wrong about the analysis on which it was based. The fundamental propositions of arithmetic and geometry possess, according to him, a universality and necessity for which experience does not account. They stand on a totally different footing from the truths of simple experience, however certain these may be. We say that all matter is heavy; but we do not see why it should be so, and the contrary proposition is equally conceivable. But it is inconceivable that seven and five should not be equal to twelve, or that their sum should be equal to any other number. And so with the axiom that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. It had been attempted to explain the difference by saying that such propositions are what is called *analytical*—that twelve *means* no more than seven plus five, that a rectilinear figure *means* a space surrounded by at least three straight lines. But Kant will not agree to this. He maintains that in analytical judgments the predicate adds nothing to the information already conveyed by the subject. For example, when I affirm that all matter is extended, I affirm no more than that the notion of matter contains, among other notes, the note of extension. But when I affirm matter to be heavy, I add something to the notion that was not there before, the note of gravity. Kant distinguishes this second class of judgments by calling them synthetic. If, like the truth last quoted, they are derived from experience, he calls them synthetic judgments *a posteriori*. If they go beyond experience, he calls them synthetic judgments *a priori*.

The law of causation belongs to this class of truths. We can no more question it than we can question the axioms of geometry. At the occurrence of every new phenomenon science assumes with confidence that it is determined by an antecedent in time; and even the unscientific assume as much in the ordinary experience of life.

Kant wants to know how we can come by this *a priori* knowledge, so exceptional, so superior in dignity to the great bulk of our information. He formulates the demand by asking,

How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible? There is a reminiscence of his predecessor, Wolf, in the expression; for Wolf had defined philosophy as the science of the possible as such. But neither he nor any other thinker who assumed that things could be known without experience had seen any difficulty in accounting for that remarkable revelation. Phrases about the spirituality of the soul, innate ideas implanted by God, antenatal visions, immediate intuitions, in short, all the jargon of mysticism, were made do duty for a genuine scientific explanation. But Kant was too deeply imbued with the rationalism of his century to be put off with mystical phrases. And such notions as God and the soul were among the least fitted to support a philosophical theory of knowledge, being at that moment on their trial for life. All assertions about them would come under the head of those very synthetic judgments *a priori*, whose possibility had to be accounted for.

A famous saying of Leibniz perhaps gave the hint for a solution. To the principle that there is nothing in the intellect that has not been in the senses, the author of the 'Monadology' had replied, 'except the intellect itself.' Kant prefers to distinguish the two sources of knowledge as object and subject—a distinction which has become classical. He assigns their respective shares to these two fundamental factors in a somewhat summary fashion. It seems appropriate that the subject, being simple and self-identical, should contribute the constant or formal element in knowledge, while the manifold and fluctuating or material element comes from without, from the object.

Among the subjective elements, space and time present themselves first. As the fundamental forms of perception under which we become conscious of ourselves and of the world in general, they must originate from within. They are imposed by us on the data of sense, and have no other reality than what this function implies, no objective counterpart in the nature of things. Hence the self-evident certainty of all our affirmations about space and time as such, and the demonstrative character of mathematical science. We know them thoroughly because we have created them. Our consciousness of them is the consciousness of our own activity.

Kant's theory of the ideality of space and time may have been suggested by his distinction between analytic and synthetic

judgments. What makes the former so certain is that in them the mind operates on its own creations. To say that matter is extended is to make explicit what was already implicit in the subject. But here the process is deliberate, and is carried on with a full knowledge of its character. In dealing with space and time, on the other hand, we have the consciousness of their ideality only to the extent of an instinctive confidence in our own control of the facts under consideration. Kant, however, does not explain why we have been so late in arriving at a consciousness of this consciousness; why we have had to wait until he informed us of what was passing in our own minds.

Since Kant wrote it has been maintained by some philosophers[1] that the ideality of space and time does not necessarily follow from the fact that our knowledge of them cannot be accounted for by mere sensuous experience. We discover them by intuition, and can discover them in no other way; but the same intuition tells us that they have a real existence apart from ourselves. We are in them, not they in us. An ideal counterpart or representative of reality does not exclude reality itself. And it is alleged that Kant has not even attempted to prove the contrary. This, however, is not strictly accurate, for he does allude to the possibility of such an alternative, but only to dismiss it as involving the assumption of a pre-established harmony between subject and object.[2] And such a hypothesis would no doubt imply a miraculous interference with the order of nature, excluded by the rationalism of the age. But the true source of Kant's idealism is probably to be sought in a more imperative order of considerations. Assuming the independent reality of space and time, there might be more in them than is dreamt of in our mathematics,—things even which, if we knew them, would upset our best established conclusions—an apprehension since fully justified by the rise of non-Euclidean geometry.

Thus at its very beginning the Critical Philosophy betrays a tendency to make convenience of systematisation—a form of what I have called intellectual ophelism—the test of truth.

[1] Especially Cousin and Trendelenburg.

[2] 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft': Transcendentale Analytik, erstes Buch, *sub fin.* (p. 163 of Kirchmann's ed.). Kant is not speaking of space and time, but of the categories; his argument, however, applies equally well to the former.

And this goes hand in hand with a tendency to interpret acts of cognition as acts of volition, quite new in the history of thought and fruitful of great results, but in the first instance singularly well adapted for negotiating that restoration of religious belief which Kant always kept in view as the ultimate goal of his enterprise.

Given a chaotic miscellany of sense-impressions spread out before us under the forms of space and time, a further manipulation is needed before the contents of consciousness can be digested into an orderly scheme of knowledge. It is well to say that we learn from experience; but how is experience itself made possible? Only, according to Kant, by what he calls the categories of the understanding, but what we may call that spontaneous logic of the human mind, implied in all language, which Aristotle reduced to scientific form. In order to say anything about anything else, subject must be distinguished from predicate and affirmation from denial; while the subject itself must be conceived as one, or some, or all. Further, the judgments thus formed have to be thought of as standing in certain relations to one another, and as having their subjects and predicates linked together with various degrees of stringency. In this way Kant arrives at twelve, and only twelve, necessary combinations in which the data of consciousness are grouped together, and which are to the understanding what space and time are to sensuous perceptism, one of them being the relation of cause and effect.[1] Thus the law of causation recovers the character of universality and necessity taken from it by Hume. But Kant, like Hume, conceives it as being no more than a law of succession in time. It is therefore, like time, purely subjective and ideal, in other words, not applicable to things in themselves, to the hidden ground of phenomena. We may, and must, ask for the cause of each particular event, but not for a cause of all events, of the world as a whole. Without the categories phenomena would be unintelligible; but apart from their phenomenal content the categories are empty and meaningless: they have no validity beyond the range of our experience.

Nevertheless, our mind is so constituted that it seeks to

[1] Not what is generally meant by the term, but an ideal relation which the adjunction of time converts into necessary sequence.

transcend these limits. Following the example of Aristotle, Kant distinguishes between Understanding, or the faculty by which we carry on particular trains of reasoning, and Reason, or the faculty by which first principles are apprehended. Understanding operates on materials supplied through the imagination by the senses: it gives truth, but truth of a relative and conditioned sort, strictly limited, as we have seen, to experience. Reason, on the other hand, is content with nothing less than absolute and unconditional reality. It seems to combine the abstract processes of thought with the fulness, the totality, and the infinity of intuition under the forms of space and time. As such it evolves three paramount Ideas, as Kant calls them, under which the whole of knowledge is summed up. All subjective phenomena are finally referred to an abiding unity, which is the soul. All objective phenomena, conceived in their totality, together constitute the world. And the synthesis of these two is the Being of Beings, the absolute reality: in other words, it is God. The forms of intuition were proved to be subjective; the categories of the understanding were proved to be subjective; have the ideas of reason any better claim to stand for an independent existence? It would seem as if they had none.

When Kant called his great work a 'Critique of Pure Reason,' he meant that it was to be an enquiry into the competence of reason, apart from experience, to guarantee the objective reality of its three ideas, or, in the language of his predecessors, to establish the validity of metaphysics and the truth of natural religion. And with him, as with Hume, the immediate result is complete scepticism. For rational theology was based on arguments assuming that space, time, and causality exist independently of our mental constitution, whereas the Critique shows them to be purely subjective. And with this demonstration the enquiry might be brought to a summary conclusion. But Kant disdains such an easy victory. Meeting the metaphysicians on their own ground, he takes the three Ideas one after the other, and shows the futility of the reasonings by which it has been attempted to make them the basis of a creed. The immortality of the soul had been inferred from its simplicity. But, even assuming this alleged simplicity to have been proved, it is irrelevant to the question; for we can

conceive a simple substance dwindling away until it vanishes into nothingness. As to the world and its origin, contradictory views may be maintained with the same appearance of logic. An extended universe must be either finite or infinite, composed of atoms or infinitely divisible, created or eternal, contingent or self-existent; and each of these mutually exclusive alternatives can be proved by arguments of equal cogency. Finally, the arguments for the existence of God are entirely futile. The only one that seems adequate to such an object is the ontological proof. Given the idea of a perfect Being, his existence necessarily follows from it, for he would not be perfect did he not exist. But this is mere sophistry. Ideas are complete in themselves whether they have or have not a counterpart in reality. My conception of a hundred dollars remains the same whether I am or am not in possession of that sum.

So far Kant's criticism of theology is destructive. His conclusion, however, is less negative than Hume's. Speculative reason neither affirms nor denies realities transcending experience. And scepticism, as usual, leaves an opening for faith. Our philosopher chiefly impressed his contemporaries as the author of a new method for the restoration of belief. It is a method which, with various modifications, has been practised ever since, and nowhere perhaps so much as in England, but never so warily as by its first originator.

Speculative reason is a constructive faculty, creating the ideas by which knowledge attains to system and unity. But these ideas remain ideals; they are not realised by being thought. It is otherwise with what Kant calls Practical Reason. This also is a principle of systematic unity, a unity which must be realised, or life would contradict itself, would fall into chaos. We are reasonable beings, and reasonable conduct cannot be conceived except as obedience to a common law, the same for all. That law is morality. If in contemplating any action we pause to ask what would happen were every one to do what we think of doing, and if we find that the consequence would be social ruin, then we may be sure that the action is wrong. Let it not be imagined, however, that mere obedience to the law suffices to make us moral agents. To obey it from selfish or sentimental motives is not to obey it at all.

Neither fear of bad consequences to ourselves, nor hope of pleasure, nor pride, nor affection, can be permitted to determine our choice. Reverence for the law as such is the sole moral motive. This does not mean, as some have supposed, that duty must be opposed to inclination. The two may or may not coincide: but whether they do or do not is indifferent to duty. Its command is what Kant calls a categorical imperative: Do this or that because it is right, as distinguished from the hypothetical imperative, which is merely advising people to do this or that if they want to avoid being punished in this world or damned in the next.

The clear enunciation of this principle was the greatest single advance ever made in ethical science, and raises Kant high above the level of his eighteenth-century predecessors, who had all more or less contaminated its purity by the admixture of earthly or heavenly sanctions. But his own grasp of its bearings seems to have been imperfect.

To begin with, he interprets disinterested morality as postulating the metaphysical doctrine of freewill. What we ought to do we can do. Of that there certainly can be no doubt. But the facts do not seem to warrant Kant's inference that the moral will is released from the law of causality. Reverence for right may surely be conceived as a motive sufficiently strong to overcome the solicitations of animal passion, or evil habits, or self-interest; and it will be for psychology to explain how so beneficent a result has been attained in certain favoured individuals. Only the assumption that man is by nature incapable of obeying any higher motive than enlightened self-interest can begin to justify such an abrogation of natural law as the appeal to freedom involves; and apparently Kant was misled by the common opinion of his contemporaries into making such an assumption. The awkward thing was that his philosophy had pledged him from the outset to that law of universal causality which freewill would signally violate. But herein, as I have said, lay one of those contradictions which the German mind delights to discover and reconcile.

Kant gets out of his self-created dilemma by means of the doctrine of the ideality of time. If all events form, and must form, a continuous unbroken chain of causally connected antecedents and consequents, the reason is that, by the constitution

of our minds, we are obliged to view them under the form of time, which they have to fill up in a forward-flowing stream. But this very fact shows that,we being, so to speak, the creators of time, are independent of it, and therefore also independent of the law of causation. In every act of freewill, in every moral act, we verify this independence and initiate a fresh series of events.

So far Kant puts himself in line with the ordinary indeterminists; and one would expect him to say, like them, that human actions, being free, are not calculable, not predictable, or, at least, not predictable in so far as they are free. But in him the scientific spirit would not permit of such a derogation from law. Any one, he tells us, with sufficient knowledge and ability, could predict what a given person in given circumstances would do. Possibly he was anticipating under a half-mystical, half-scholastic form the modern doctrine that determinism and moral reponsibility are perfectly compatible facts. But his method of reconciling them cannot be called particularly happy. For the necessity of viewing actions under the time form is so absolute that it extends to character, which indeed is merely another name for the totality of a man's actions together with their determining motives, summed up under general headings. And these must be understood as a succession if they are to be understood at all. Kant's so-called 'intelligible' character existing outside time is really the most unintelligible thing in the world, even on the principles of his own philosophy. He forgets also that our individuality is at least as phenomenal as our bondage to time and space. Abolish these dispersive forms, and the result is likely to be a mystical monism in theory and a rigorous fatalism in practice.

Kant's object was not merely to vindicate morality, but also to restore religion. His theology, however, is even more illogical than the ethics on which it is built. As a speculative method the Critique is agnostic. Not merely can nothing be known outside experience, but the widest imaginable extension of experience would bring us no nearer to absolute reality, that is to something independent of our consciousness, and subject neither to the forms of space and time nor to the categories of the understanding. There can be no meaning in immortality apart from time. There can be no meaning in God apart from

causation. Nor is this all. By his theory of morality Kant would seem to have cut the ground from under ethical ophelism as an element of faith. Seeing that his categorical imperative demands unconditional loyalty to the law of duty, and seeing that a good will—which is the only real good—would cease to be itself were any extraneous motive allowed to contaminate its purity, we might have expected that its herald would, less than any other philosopher, have entangled morality in a compromising alliance with theological sanctions.

Nevertheless, it is just on the foundations of his moral and metaphysical idealism that Kant attempts to rebuild the fallen edifice of natural religion. As the Critique of Pure Reason neither affirms nor denies the existence of transcendent realities, an opening is left for faith. And faith appeals to the demands of the Practical Reason in support of its claims. We are not, it is true, to do our duty in hopes of being rewarded for it hereafter; but in order to virtuous effort we must form an ideal of the highest good towards which such effort tends. That ideal is the harmony of virtue and happiness, a harmony not to be realised in this life, and only realisable elsewhere as the goal of an infinite endeavour. In other words, the moral ideal postulates individual immortality as the necessary condition of its attainment. More than this, it postulates a moral and intelligent agency by which the order of things has been so adjusted that virtue and happiness shall ultimately be brought into harmony with one another. And that agency is what we mean by God.

Whether this preposterous theology was ever seriously accepted, as originally propounded, by any human being may be doubted. There are even doubts as to whether Kant himself took it quite seriously. By a curious ethical irony, beliefs professedly based on a moral interest always remain open to the suspicion of immoral equivocation; and from this suspicion the Critique of Practical Reason has not escaped. It is even related that on being asked in society what he thought about a future life, the philosopher frowned and remained silent. When the question was repeated, he replied that no store should be set on that belief.[1] We are assured that his theism at any rate was beyond doubt. Yet it might have occurred

[1] Hettner, III., ii., 26.

to a bystander that as God was only postulated in order to guarantee the future union of virtue with happiness, still less store could be set on his existence.

Apart from the two rather ambiguous postulates of his ethical faith, Kant's rejection of supernatural religion is complete.[1] Miracles are inconsistent with the fixed order of nature necessarily assumed by reason, and as a matter of fact they do not happen. Guilt is neither incurred by the fault nor expiated by the merit of another. Prayer has no efficacy; nor have the ceremonies of public worship any value apart from a good life. But, like Rousseau, Kant was amicably disposed towards Christianity, and, like Lessing, he sought to give its leading dogmas a philosophical interpretation. His estimate of human nature, however, differs widely from Rousseau's. It is, he says, radically evil, and so far lends countenance to the doctrine of original sin considered as a universal taint. History and observation bear testimony to a widespread wickedness, not to be accounted for as a simple yielding to animal passion, but amounting to a deliberate rebellion against the moral law as such, and meriting infinite punishment. This apostasy from right reason may be properly described as a fall of man from his destined state; nor can he be rescued therefrom by any gradual process of reformation. Nothing less than instantaneous conversion and regeneration is needed to restore him to his primitive dignity. But even when this momentous step has been accomplished by the workings of grace, as theologians say, or by his own convictions and efforts, as pure reason says, past guilt still remains to be expiated. Punishment before conversion would have been useless, for the sinner would not have recognised its justice: punishment after conversion would be unjust, for it would not then be deserved. In this dilemma the agonies of repentance are accepted in full discharge of the debt incurred. Thus there is a reasonable sense in which we may say that the sufferings of an innocent person are a vicarious satisfaction for the sins of the guilty.

What happens in the course of every individual conversion has been illustrated on a world-wide scale in the drama of universal history. From the moral point of view, the world has

[1] His views are to be found in the treatise entitled 'Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft.'

been created that the law of righteousness might be fulfilled, and of all known beings man alone is capable of fulfilling it. As the supreme end of things he is the final cause of nature, the divine Word by which all things were made, the eternal Son of God. But, owing to the fall and corruption of the race, this purpose has only been adequately fulfilled in the one example of perfection it has produced, in the sinless life leading to the death in torment and shame of Jesus Christ. In him the moral ideal is personified, and the divine Sonship completely exhibited.

A more shadowy existence falls to the Third Person in the Trinity, whom Kant identifies with the spirit of good in ourselves, the source of comfort and confidence when we are beset by fears of relapsing into sin. But he has another method of demonstrating the Trinity as a truth of pure reason, which is to consider the three persons as separate aspects of the divine essence in its legislative, administrative, and judicial capacity.

Kant's reconciliation of religion with reason is, as the foregoing summary will have amply made evident, neither rational nor religious, but a mere provisional *modus vivendi;* and, like all such provisional arrangements, was contemptuously flung aside by his successors; nor has any of the neo-Kantian school, so far as I know, attempted to revive it. Even on the principles of his own critical philosophy it is logically indefensible; much more then on the monistic principles by which his critical dualism was speedily replaced. Fichte, Kant's immediate follower in the line of speculative evolution, had studied Spinoza deeply, and stood to his German master in much the same relation as that in which Spinoza had stood to Descartes. His 'Theory of Knowledge' uses the materials supplied by the 'Critique of Pure Reason,' but throws them into a simpler and more systematic form. Kant had assumed subject and object as coexistent independent entities, each contributing its share to the contents of consciousness. Fichte assumes nothing but that of which we are immediately certain, the Self. The self is active, or rather is pure activity, and as such would naturally spread out to an infinity in which the consciousness essential to selfhood would be lost. Accordingly it sets up a limit, an obstacle to its own advance, which yet it labours to overcome. This

limit, this obstacle, is the not-self; and from the incessant action and reaction of these two arises the world of sense, of space and time, of the categories, analysed but not perfectly understood by Kant.

The Self is of course neither Fichte's own nor any other subject: it is the absolute Ego realising itself in a multitude of individual and relative selves in order to more complete consciousness and power in its conflict with the non-Ego, that is to say with the material world. Our duty is to spiritualise and assimilate this world of matter, penetrating it through and through with intellect and will, that the absolute Self may be all in all. All other duties exist but as means to that great end. Our social obligations from justice up to mutual love and help have for their sole object, not happiness, but the more and more perfect organisation of the human race as a colossal instrument for the work of scientific and industrial progress. That work must, from the nature of the case, go on for ever. Were it completed by the perfect assimilation of the non-Ego, the absorption without a remainder of nature into spirit, the very condition of consciousness would be abolished, and the Self would expire at the moment of victory.

With such an ethical system as Fichte's there can no longer be any question of a reconciliation between happiness and virtue; for happiness is a thing of no account. Nor yet does it postulate the fulfilment of the moral ideal; for such fulfilment, as we have seen, would involve the annihilation of the Self. There is, then, no need of a God to realise the irrealisable; nor, for other reasons, does Fichte's philosophy permit us to conceive that such a being as the personal God of the theists can exist. Personality implies consciousness, and consciousness implies limitation—limitation of a twofold sort, first by that which is not ourselves, by the material world, and then by that which is not myself, by my fellow-men. Nevertheless, there is an element of truth in Kant's theology. God exists, not indeed as the reconciler, but as the reconciliation. He is the moral order of the world, the very process by which truth and right, and that which alone gives truth and right their value, the power of spirit over matter, comes to be realised.

Such a confession of faith very naturally, although much to his own surprise, brought on Fichte a charge of atheism, leading

in the end to his expulsion from the chair of philosophy at Jena. This catastrophe, combined with the reactionary tendencies of the new century, led him to reconsider his theological position, and indeed to reshape his whole philosophical system. But these ulterior developments do not concern us here. From the chair provided for him at Berlin Fichte exercised a great and happy influence on the moral life of Germany. Alone among her philosophers he contributed by his lectures to the patriotic movement by which Napoleon was finally overthrown. The movement, however, although idealistic in its origin, was not connected with one system more than with another; still less had it anything to do with religion; and Fichte's later version of religion in particular never seems to have gained a single disciple. Here it will be enough to say that God was no longer conceived under the abstract form of the moral order of the world, but in a more concrete fashion as the root-fact of existence manifesting itself through human consciousness, but possessing no more personality than is connected with such a manifestation. This is Spinoza's pantheism under another name, and possibly with the addition of belief in human immortality.

Pantheism is, indeed, as Heine has observed, the real religion of Germany; a fact rather startlingly illustrated at the close of the eighteenth century by the publication of the first and most popular work of one destined to be recognised hereafter as the greatest of modern German theologians. I refer to the celebrated manifesto of Schleiermacher, entitled 'Discourses on Religion,' and addressed 'to the educated among her despisers.' The class so designated might have retorted that the orator surrendered all they had ever rejected, and offered them as the essence of religion a mere phantom not worth fighting about, a sentiment as compatible, or rather, more compatible with their philosophy than with the popular theology. The young apologist, a nursling of the Moravian community, sharply separates the domain of religion from the domains of metaphysics and of morality. Its affinities are neither with reason nor with action, but with feeling. What specifically constitutes religious emotion is the feeling accompanying the intuition of the infinite universe and of our oneness with it. Such a religion can

hardly be said to involve any belief—in Schleiermacher's own case it excluded the belief in immortality—and therefore it has nothing to fear from rationalism, which means the destructive action of reason on a certain set of beliefs, not on emotions of any kind, except in so far as these cannot exist without an intellectual foundation.

Schleiermacher's position in the history of religious thought is ambiguous. In a sense his surrender of all that had been hitherto understood by religious belief marks the extreme limit of eighteenth-century rationalism, and leaves nothing more for criticism to attack. But in a sense also the Discourses, with their passionate mysticism, their convinced affirmation of religion as the supreme fact of life, and their living sympathy with all the great historical faiths, mark the beginning of a reaction likely to carry men's minds back to beliefs and practices which their author would have repudiated with the whole force of his acute and comprehensive understanding. Perhaps it was in the anticipation of such a disastrous development that Goethe and Schiller read the book with a disgust rather surprising, at least on Goethe's part, when we remember how nearly he approached its standpoint in Faust's famous confession of faith, where also feeling is glorified as the all-in-all of religion. And in point of fact Schleiermacher did find himself intimately associated with the Romantic movement which, starting from the classical idealism of Weimar, was turning more and more to the Middle Ages for its models in social, artistic, and intellectual construction. One of the leaders of the movement, and for a time Schleiermacher's most intimate friend, Friedrich Schlegel, threw himself eagerly into the religious current, and not long afterwards found an appropriate resting-place in the Roman Catholic Church, to be followed by many others of the same school, among whom, had he lived, would probably have been included the most gifted of the Romanticists, Novalis.

Meanwhile German scholarship was slowly amassing the materials for that criticism of the Bible which has aided the general movement of European rationalism far more powerfully than German philosophy and speculative theology, partly because its results, being independent of the peculiar German

temperament, could be easily communicated to foreign nations, partly also because its methods harmonised with the general trend of historical research all over the Western world. After Spinoza had begun the work of disintegration, the next steps, curiously enough, were taken by two French Catholics, one of them an Oratorian, the celebrated Richard Simon. According to no less an authority than Ernest Renan, Father Simon created the modern method of exegesis.[1] In his 'Critical History of the Old Testament' he treats the Pentateuch as a gradual growth formed by successive interpolations and recasts. Bossuet, whose attention was called to the work before its publication, scented the danger to traditional faith, and at once procured an order for the destruction of the whole edition (1678). It was, however, secretly reprinted in Holland, and enjoyed a wide circulation. But Simon had far outstripped his age, and three-quarters of a century elapsed before Astruc, the son of a Huguenot pastor, who had abjured his faith after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, published those epoch-making researches into the composition of Genesis in which the so-called Elohist and Jehovist documents were first distinguished. Thirty years later the same results were independently reached by Eichhorn, from the date of whose 'Introduction to the Old Testament' they may be considered as definitely acquired to science; Ernesti had already laid down the fundamental principle of rationalistic exegesis, that the Bible is to be interpreted like any other book (1761); while Semler, going a step further, had definitively shattered the dogma of inspiration by showing that the formation of the Canon was a gradual process effected by purely human means. Like the English deists, he held that the demoniacs of the Gospel were simply insane or epileptic sufferers; and, possibly at the suggestion of Middleton, who seems also to have influenced his views on early Church history, he drew attention to the unlikeness between Judaic and Pauline Christianity.

It may have been noticed, with some surprise, that in this preliminary sketch of the history of rationalism very little account has been taken of physical science. But in fact the

[1] See his Preface to the French translation of Kuenen's 'History of the Old Testament.'

popular idea of its importance as a factor in the destructive action of reason on religious belief is considerably exaggerated. It may be admitted that in our own time the hostility, real or supposed, of science to religion has done more to shake popular belief in the supernatural than all other causes put together. But the question is what share reason as such has borne in this revolution. It seems to me that what we have here is less a real advance of reason than a transfer of authority from religious to naturalistic belief. Practical interests have been so profoundly affected by mechanical inventions due to increased knowledge of natural laws, and the imagination has been so stirred by the far-reaching vistas which a scientific reconstruction of our planet's past history discloses, that a great part of the reverence once given to priests and to their stories of an unseen universe has been transferred to the astronomer, the geologist, the physician, and the engineer. It is assumed that they know everything, and that what they agree in discrediting must be false. But authority is not reason, and although a valuable help towards procuring a fair hearing for reason, cannot with advantage be put in its place. It is especially a dangerous game to play against the theologians, who, being accustomed to manipulate authority for their own purposes, much prefer to join issue on that ground. Assuming that their pretensions are threatened from no other quarter, they either try to discredit science, or to discredit its representatives, or to detach them by timely concessions from the ranks of rationalism.

In this connexion I may refer to a totally unwarrantable phrase which not many years since obtained wide circulation, 'the bankruptcy of science.' An abstract term expressing the sum of what we know about nature can break no engagements, because it cannot enter into any. Philosophers may have cherished unreasonable expectations of the happiness destined to result from a more thorough acquaintance with the laws of the material universe; but they cannot burden their heirs with the obligation of realising their dreams. Such charges have also the disadvantage of exposing their authors to dangerous recriminations. No religious or political institutions, not even the most reactionary, have redeemed the promises made by their more fanatical supporters.

Vague talk about science in the abstract, or rather about its semi-mythical personification, has the graver disadvantage of obscuring its historical conditions. It begins to pass for a sort of beneficent genius, bestowing priceless gifts on mankind, but possessing a life independent of theirs, or, like that of the old gods, dependent only on their sacrifices in the shape of liberal endowments. But science needs something more than endowments. It can only flourish in a particular intellectual climate, which, when once created, it can help to maintain, but which other social factors are needed in the first instance to create. It is doubtful whether the Copernican astronomy could have been constructed without the classical revival, or have held its ground without the Reformation; although when once established it no doubt contributed to the weakening of traditional authority. And the science which, from the rationalistic point of view, comes next to astronomy in historical order, that is geology, was retarded for at least a century by theological prejudice. Leibniz led the way in 1680 by his theory, now universally admitted to be true, that the earth began as an incandescent and molten mass of matter. All that followed has been merely a question of detailed investigation. But the working out of Leibniz's great conception brought the geologists at every step into collision with the Scriptural statement that the world had been created in six days, and even with the theistic belief that it had been created at a particular date. Further complications were introduced by the fable of a universal deluge, confirmed, even to its alleged date, by the New Testament, which not only embarrassed the explorers of the earth's crust by interfering with their conclusions, but even set them on a false track by suggesting that this miraculous visitation was responsible for traces of marine action really referable to changes of far remoter antiquity. Indeed, Voltaire's grotesque theory that the fossil marine shells found among the Alps were left there by pilgrims returning from Palestine, shows with what success the new science had been appropriated to the defence of orthodoxy. At a later period Cuvier's theory of catastrophes, itself perhaps suggested by the Scriptural Deluge, supported the theistic belief in special creations. Every now and then the earth was supposed to have been visited by a tremendous convulsion, involving the destruction of all its living inhabitants, with a consequent necessity

for the intervention of divine power to replace them by a new set of plants and animals. And later still, after the discovery of glacial periods, it was held by some that a like wholesale destruction of organic life must have been caused by ice-caps extending from the poles to the equator, to be made good in each instance from some inexhaustible source of power.[1]

Such are the vagaries of science when placed under the guardianship of theological traditions. The truth is that men of science, so far from being emancipators of the human mind, owe their own emancipation from superstition—so far as it goes—to the higher and freer spirit of philosophy and literary criticism. With many of them a childish eagerness for rewards and distinctions, combined with a more than childish dread of giving offence to the established authorities, produces a servile attitude towards what they suppose to be the reigning opinions; while with many also absorption in specialities, and a pedantic horror of theories stand in the way of daring innovations. Thus the nebular hypothesis, though afterwards accepted by astronomers, owes its origination not to any professional astronomer, but to an amateur, the philosopher Kant, led thereto by a deep conviction that all physical phenomena are explicable by physical causes; and a century later we find the same hypothesis indebted for its most powerful advocacy to another philosopher, Herbert Spencer, animated, in this instance, by the same spirit as Kant. Again, while geologists like Buckland and Hugh Miller were laboriously reconciling their science with 'The Mosaic account of creation,' historical criticism came to the rescue by demonstrating that there *is* no Mosaic account, but at least two conflicting accounts, written long after the date assigned to Moses, of perfectly human and uninspired origin—'mosaic' indeed, but with a small m. Lyell's uniformitarian theory, which drove Cuvier's catastrophes and miraculous fresh creations out of the field, is said to have been suggested by the gradual growth of the English constitution, that is to say, by historical criticism of another kind. And it will be shown hereafter that the doctrine of evolution, now commonly regarded as an achievement of physical science, really originated among philosophical students of human history, and was forced by their speculations on the biologists. Similarly

[1] This was what Agassiz believed.

the group of ideas and tendencies known under the collective name of Positivism, whether understood according to the strict definition of Auguste Comte or in the looser sense associated with it by contemporary philosophical classification, were originated, developed, and systematised in primary reference to human interests.

So much had to be premised in order to guard against an overestimate of the scientific factor in modern rationalism. Nevertheless, physical science has unquestionably played an important part in the rationalistic movement of the nineteenth century, chiefly in the way of verification. It has told by giving reality and life to the contention of Diderot and Hume, that the action of natural causes might be sufficient to explain structures previously interpreted as the productions of a designing intelligence. It has told by bringing new evidence for the derivation of man, with all his mental faculties, from animals no higher than those to whom religion now denies an immortal soul. It has told by extending the antiquity of the human race to a period totally irreconcilable with statements once believed to be binding on religious faith; and at the same time, more indirectly but more powerfully, by enormously multiplying the number of human beings who were allowed to perish unredeemed. The disproportion of heathens to Christians, alarming enough before, has become utterly inexplicable by theology through the results of modern research. Instead of the problematic inhabitants of possible planets, who may or may not have fallen, who may or may not have heard about the Atonement, science confronts us with millions of men who certainly lived and died in prehistoric ages, who certainly sinned, of whom it is not less certain than of any unconverted savage now that their sins were not forgiven. We say science, but practically the one science of geology has done it all. And that science owes its first fostering to the rationalism of the eighteenth century, its final emancipation to the rationalism of the nineteenth.

CHAPTER V

ENGLISH RATIONALISM BEFORE AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION

In the preceding chapters of this work we have followed the general history of European Rationalism down to the close of the eighteenth century, by way of a prelude to the more strictly limited portion which is to follow. Henceforth we shall be concerned with the history of rationalism in England alone, or with the progress of destructive criticism abroad only in so far as it has contributed to a similar process among ourselves.

To trace the vicissitudes of that process is a more complicated and difficult operation than might at first sight appear. The historian of rationalism in the great Continental countries, that is, practically speaking, in France, Germany, and their intellectual dependencies, has a far simpler and easier task to perform. He has to describe a comparatively regular curve, and the materials for its construction are unequivocal and abundant. With us it is otherwise. For while the corresponding tendency has never been so regular or so sharply defined, the indications of its presence, seldom in themselves very intrusive, have been habitually kept out of sight by the chief organs of public opinion for fear of causing scandal or annoyance. And, what is more important, we may say of the conflict between reason and faith, as of all other conflicts, that the dividing line between the principles and parties at issue has been much less trenchant in England than elsewhere. That this is so will be generally admitted; but why it should be so requires some more precise explanation than the vague commonplaces which generally do duty for that purpose.

Religious belief, whether positive or negative, belonging as it does to the inmost life of a people, must obey the conditions by which that life has been first shaped, and the forces, whether

permanent or transitory, which continuously develop or control it. Now, with the English people these conditions have been exceptionally varied, these forces have been not only variable but singularly subtle and elusive in their action. The geographical structure of the British archipelago has enabled it to harbour a number of heterogeneous nationalities, each with a distinct character of its own, the resultant of cross-breeding between divergent but not violently contrasted racial stocks; while the use of a common language by the vast majority of the total population has brought their respective idiosyncrasies into fruitful interplay. This primordial heterogeneity arose from successive conquests on the largest scale, extended over many hundreds of years; nor did the foreign colonisation of these islands cease when the Norman settlement brought the era of armed migrations to a close. For considerable bands of fugitives sought within their shores a refuge from the religious or economical oppression of other states; and these have not been so thoroughly assimilated but that startling reversions to the ancestral type are occasionally manifested in families bearing alien names.

In the country so peopled an incomparable diversity of industrial opportunities, too well known to require enumeration, has come to complicate the original heterogeneity still further, at the same time softening down the resulting contrasts by the economic necessity of mutual dependence; while, as another and remoter consequence of England's manufacturing and commercial activity, her children have been brought into fertilising contact first of all with the great neighbouring civilisations, and finally with every form of society on the face of the earth.

The groundwork of character thus provided by physical and economical causes has received its final elaboration from political events. Whether inherited or not from our Germanic forefathers, English liberty indubitably owes its historical constitution to the very conquest which threatened to destroy it. A philosophical historian has shown that William the Conqueror, by weakening the power of his feudal nobility, unintentionally threw them for support on the people; thus preparing the balance of power between King, Lords, and Commons, the system of local self-government, and the

representative institutions by the early acquisition of which England was distinguished from the Continental states. Whether the distinction has been in all respects a gain we need not here enquire. For our present purpose the important thing to note is that, combined with those other circumstances above mentioned, it has led to the final formation of that most complex phenomenon, the English national character—complex and kaleidoscopic enough in the single type, complex and kaleidoscopic to a much higher degree of involution in the community to which it belongs.

It is a familiar commonplace that no sharp line of demarcation can be traced between the different classes and professions of which that community is made up. Their boundaries are indistinct, and their component parts circulate in a continual stream up and down or to and fro from one to the other. But it is also true, though less generally recognised, and sometimes even implicitly denied, that no single creed or interest or tendency has ever become permanently associated with any one class, or party, or church, or local division in the country. Attempts have indeed been made to find a historical basis for our modern party-groupings, to connect them by an unbroken line of continuity with the sections, whether of race or of religion, of industry or of geographical position, between which the nation has at some former period been divided. But even when certain external links of parentage, and a process, so to speak, of merely mechanical evolution have been made good, the advocates of this view have failed to establish any deeper community of principle between the causes which they have sought to identify or to bring under a common denomination. Our sympathies may go out warmly to one particular side in those 'battles long ago;' and we may fancy that the fortune of ideas we hold most dear was bound up with its success; while in reality its champions would have been filled with dismay at their own victory, and their adversaries consoled for defeat, could either have foreseen the remote issues involved in the event of some decisive day.

Again, when we exaggerate the affinities between ourselves and those whom we suppose to have represented our opinions in the past, we are led to overlook the extent to which they and their opponents were agreed. This fundamental agreement is indeed

a prominent characteristic of the English spirit, a necessary consequence of the conditions by which it has been shaped. And thus it is that in the midst of their most ardent conflicts Englishmen remain united by a close community of ideas and aims, feeling themselves often intellectually and morally not much more deeply separated in the theological and political arena than, in their hours of relaxation, at the whist-table, on the cricket-field, on the race-course, or on the river. It would be untrue to say that they make politics a game; but their preferences are in fact determined by such slight differences of valuation that they can fight with as little rancour as if they were playing a game. Hence the facility with which English statesmen change sides, or adopt measures habitually identified with the policy of the opposite party. They 'called the chess-board white'—they 'call it black,' but none knew better at all times how equally it was divided between the two. Some of the most illustrious names in English history—Strafford, Swift, Burke, and Peel, not to mention more recent instances—may be quoted among the number; and their conduct either before or after the great change has been ascribed to anything rather than disinterested conviction; but the best informed historical criticism has done full justice to the integrity of their political conscience.[1]

Another result of the same balanced attitude, and one less open to misconstruction, is the English disposition to compromise. Where controversies turn on such slight differences there is no sacrifice of principle involved in surrendering a part of the claim originally advanced; especially when, as often happens, there is good hope of eventually securing the whole by patience and moderation. Only a fraction, however, of the compromises effected in English history have been publicly acknowledged as such. Various settlements which seemed to imply the exclusive triumph of one side have practically involved an admission that the other side had to a great extent made good its claims. Thus the Cavalier Parliament of 1661,

[1] Croker, Macaulay, and Disraeli, carrying the vindictive clannish feelings of the Irishman, the Highlander, and the Jew into English politics, have done much to introduce bad blood where it ought not to have been encouraged. On the other hand, no one has done so much justice to English placability and magnanimity as Sir Walter Scott, who viewed it from the outside, but with high artistic sympathy and appreciation.

with all its passionate loyalty to the Crown, really confirmed and carried on the work of Pym and Hampden; while the Latitudinarian Church of the Restoration gave security against the return to Rome, dread of which had alone won popular favour for the Puritan movement. And, conversely, what seemed the annihilation of Jacobitism at Culloden was followed within a brief interval by its virtual revival in the Francophil policy of Bute, and the personal government of George III.

Where a number of competing interests and beliefs coexist in the community, many of them organised under the form of voluntary associations, with none so powerful as to establish its undisputed ascendency, and none so weak as to permit of its complete suppression, a spirit of good humour, fairplay, and mutual toleration seems likely to prevail. The desire to avoid undue self-assertion, combined with respect for the tastes and possible peculiarities of other people, or with the fear of giving offence by some unguarded utterance, will generate a certain amount of social shyness. But at the same time truthfulness and candour will be encouraged; for where there is so little danger in the avowal of eccentric or unpopular opinions, their concealment, and still more the pretence of adhesion to the established creeds, would betoken a more than ordinarily contemptible pusillanimity. And unquestionably this sort of courage has long been an element in the English ideal of character; any expression of it being at all times likely to command the applause of an English audience.

Nevertheless, it would be vain to ignore the fact that English society, as compared with that of France or Germany, has not precisely this reputation, but rather the opposite, where the deepest religious questions are concerned. A wide latitude of choice among the creeds has long been permitted; but whatever may be the case just now, or whatever may have been the case from a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago, it yet remains true that during an extended period of English history, and that too a period distinguished for great intellectual activity, the profession, and still more the publication in print of complete disbelief in religion, or even in what were supposed to be the essential dogmas of Christianity, was repressed by a system of penalties and disabilities strikingly at variance with the principles of religious liberty affected by those who inflicted

them. And it would be equally vain to deny that during the same period the English people, more than any other nation, with the possible exception of their American kinsfolk, have earned a reputation for religious cant and hypocrisy wholly incompatible with the courage and truthfulness claimed by themselves as peculiarly English, and assumed as genuine in the foregoing characterisation.

I think it will be found on examination that these seemingly adverse views are perfectly reconcilable with one another; that the exception proves the rule; and that the anomaly arises from the same fundamental conditions to which we owe a type of character on the whole admirable, although disfigured for a time by this accidental and transitory blemish.

A historical parallel may facilitate the explanation. Among the city-states of antiquity the Athenian democracy was famous for the individual liberty enjoyed by its citizens, a liberty shared to a great extent by the women and by the servile population. On this point we have the concurrent evidence of friends and foes; and it accounts, among other things, for the fruitage of genius, without parallel in history, borne by the Attic soil. But to this liberty there was one exception; it did not extend to religion. Not only the direct denial of the popular mythology, but the publication of scientific theories seen to be inconsistent with that mythology, was punished with death by the democratic tribunals, an outrage elsewhere unknown in the Graeco-Roman world.

Now, although the Athenian people must rank high above the English for intelligence and taste, and although in other respects the two states are very widely contrasted, some very significant analogies may be observed between them. Both build up a great sea-power round an original nucleus of military strength. Both combine extreme individual liberty with an extraordinary faculty for self-government. Both have produced dramatic and lyric poetry of the highest order. In both the greatest thinkers have preferred ethical and social to purely speculative philosophy. And in both the leading minds have habitually taken into account religious prejudices which they do not always share.

It is in this last consideration that the key to the anomaly under investigation must be sought. I mean the anomaly of

individual liberty coexisting with gross religious intolerance—and it may be added of childish superstition coexisting with widely diffused intelligence in the middle class.[1] Popular intolerance and superstition naturally foster insincerity and affectation among the higher orders. We generally look on the canting hypocrite as a peculiarly modern product; and it is certain that the type has only reached perfection in modern times. But Plato has given us, under the name of Euthyphro, a real or imaginative sketch of something very like one among the contemporaries of Socrates; and Plato himself, as well as Aristophanes, has gone very far in the direction of advocating popular beliefs which he privately held to be no more than useful conventions.

Wherever and whenever the democratic element comes into prominence it will, I think, be found to exercise this sort of influence on the guiding intellects of society. The wish to flatter a great and growing power in the state; the wish to win its support for a particular party or cause; the wish to utilise religion as a restraint on popular passion, or on insolent oligarchic reaction; finally, the wish to believe what so many people believe;—all these motives taken together constitute a formidable mass of public opinion acting in restraint both of free speech and of freethought. And in the particular case of modern England it has been reinforced by that spirit of mutual respect and forbearance, of chivalrous unwillingness to push an advantage too far, of scrupulous abstinence from all that seems likely to give offence, which characterises our people in their dealings with one another. More especially will this feeling come into play when no practical advantage seems likely to result from an otherwise unpleasant discussion.

If, however, it should appear that the popular beliefs are not only irrational but mischievous, that they are directly productive of unhappiness, that they are used to prop up abuses, or that they impede the beneficent advance of physical science—not known as such at Athens—a very different tone will be

[1] Compare the implicit faith put in old prophecies by the Athenian Demos, so amusingly ridiculed by Aristophanes and Thucydides, with the millenarian and Anglo-Israelite prophecies in which the lower middle class and the uneducated upper classes of Britain take so much delight. In discussing politics the same people would show ten times the knowledge and sagacity of an average Frenchman or German.

adopted, and attacks on the obnoxious creed will be welcomed where they were once frowned down. But such breathing-spaces are not of long duration. After an interval of dismay and confusion, the religious leaders learn to accommodate themselves to altered circumstances. Temporary misunderstandings are made responsible for the quarrel; and an attempt to carry on the controversy with a single eye to the ascertainment of truth as such is either stifled by a conspiracy of silence, or blandly waved aside as the result of an antiquated point of view. Possibly the spread of knowledge among classes whose ignorance was the best guarantee of their fidelity may lead to developments by which this complacent optimism sometimes finds itself rudely disturbed. But the subject is one that must be reserved for future chapters of this work.

So much for the complexity of the English character—an interesting topic, the detailed illustration of which will fall into its proper place as we proceed. Meanwhile that particular aspect of it which we call the spirit of compromise will serve to elucidate certain phases exhibited by English rationalism in the second half of the eighteenth century. It will be remembered that the deistic movement came to a close with the appearance of Middleton's attack on ecclesiastical miracles. Negative criticism of supernatural beliefs was continued with activity and success in Scotland, France, and Germany; but for several years no important book was published on that side in the country which had long been the sole European representative of freethought. But it would be a great mistake to infer from this protracted silence that there had been any general change of opinion among Englishmen, at least in the sense of an orthodox reaction. On the contrary, what evidence we have goes to show that unbelief, whether under the form of deism or of some more extreme negation, long continued to spread through the higher classes of English society.

There was still indeed a great preponderance of literary and philosophical ability on the orthodox side, just as there had been in the age of Swift and Addison. Hartley, Johnson, Burke, and Paley among the more serious thinkers; Young, Gray, and Cowper among the poets; Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne among the novelists, threw the lustre of their genius on

the official creed; and whatever may have been Goldsmith's real convictions—if he had any convictions—his influence unquestionably told in its favour. But as the century wore on this preponderance became less decided. Horace Walpole, who was no mere fashionable dilettante, but a great master of language, an enthusiast for humanity, a penetrating observer, a deep-read scholar, and a leader in the Romantic movement, after beginning life as a pietist, turned freethinker and remained so ever afterwards. Erasmus Darwin, Bentham, Godwin, and Charles Fox[1] were atheists; Lord Shelburne, at least in private, an avowed sceptic; Gibbon, the greatest historian of modern times, need only be named in this connexion.

Even the official defenders of orthodoxy were becoming suspected of hypocrisy. Bishop Warburton 'had the reputation of being an atheist;' his patron, Lord Mansfield, 'who condemned Peter Annet to a year's hard labour for an anti-Christian publication,' was currently reported to be himself an unbeliever.[2] Lord Bristol, Bishop of Derry in 1783, did not believe in revealed religion;[3] and Bishop Watson, the celebrated apologist for Christianity and the Bible, who narrowly missed being made Archbishop of York, 'talked openly,' according to De Quincey, 'at his own table, as a Socinian.'[4]

At the same time this formidable advance of rationalism was marked by an almost complete cessation of the direct attacks on Christianity and of the attempt to set up deism as a rival religion which had characterised it during the earlier half of the century. A compromise had in fact been arranged by tacit consent between the two contending parties. The established Church was to be left in undisputed possession of its dignities and emoluments. Sensible men were to think as they liked, and might even let their friends know what they thought; but they were not to publish books against revelation, nor even to obtrude their heterodox opinions in conversation.

On this point the attitude of Horace Walpole is typical.

[1] 'No believer in religion' ('Greville Memoirs,' Pt. II., Vol. I., p. 154. First edition). Coleridge is the authority for Erasmus Darwin ('Letters,' p. 152); the evidence for Bentham and Godwin will be given later on. For Shelburne, see Bentham's Life ('Works,' Vol. X., p. 88).

[2] Bentham, *ut supra*, p. 65.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[4] 'Works,' Vol. II., p. 111.

He refers in terms of strong condemnation to the folly of the royal philosopher of Sans Souci in publishing irreligious verses at the very crisis of his fortunes,[1] and contrasts his levity with the dignified reserve of Lord Ferrers. That nobleman committed a brutal murder, for which he was hanged at Tyburn in 1760. The chaplain of the Tower, who accompanied him on his way to the scaffold, thought it his duty to begin talking about religion. Lord Ferrers, who seems to have been a deist, waved the subject aside, and declined to be drawn into a controversy with the clergyman about it. He always thought Lord Bolingbroke made a mistake in publishing his notions on religion, and would not fall into the same error.[2] A few years later Walpole visited Paris, and found, to his disgust, that the tone of French aristocratic society differed widely from that recommended by the noble assassin. Men and women were all employed in pulling down God and the King. When persons of quality were not atheists it was rather from want of intelligence than from want of good will.[3] Men of learning were at no pains to conceal their hostility to the established religion. 'At a dinner of savans the conversation was much more unrestrained, even on the Old Testament, than I would suffer at my own table in England if a single footman was present.'[4] Even in the absence of that solitary domestic Walpole considers that the subject had better be avoided. 'Freethinking is only for one's self, not for society . . . there is as much bigotry in attempting conversions from any religion as to it.'[5] Yet he sees no bigotry in maintaining the penal laws against Roman Catholicism, and complains bitterly of the new lease of life given to it by their repeal.

In return for this contemptuous toleration on the part of a sceptical society, concessions not less complete were made by the Church of England to the spirit of the age. Addison's view of Christianity as a kind of popularised Greek philosophy was accepted in good earnest. Sermons became moral essays, and the morality preached was pagan, Stoic or Epicurean doctrines

[1] 'Horace Walpole's Letters,' Vol. IV., p. 387 (Mrs. Paget Toynbee's edition).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 384.

[3] 'Letters,' Vol. VI., p. 403.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

[5] *Ibid.*

being substituted for righteousness by faith.[1] Supernatural religion was valued not as an organised method of mystical communion with the unseen, but as affording proof positive of immortality by the well-attested fact of Christ's resurrection, and 'a violent motive' to good conduct by the tremendous sanctions which his doctrines contained. Even John Wesley's preaching, which both Churchmen and sceptics regarded with dismay as a new and unexpected outburst of Puritan fanaticism, was on the moral side deeply imbued with the same spirit, and accepted with liberal sympathy every trace of aspiration towards a higher life among heathen writers.

But the spirit of compromise by no means exhausted itself in the establishment of this *modus vivendi* between rationalism and faith. It gave a great and growing importance to two sects which, more than any others, served to mediate between Christian orthodoxy and deism. I refer to the Unitarians and the Quakers, two communities which, relatively speaking, may be said to have attained their highest point of intellectual and moral strength at this epoch. Attention has already been drawn to the growth of Unitarianism as a proof of the powerful influence exercised on religious thought in England by the deistic movement. Here I may add that it had gone a long way towards joining hands with the deists, by accepting their favourite doctrine of philosophical necessity, a doctrine much more fatal to orthodox theology than even the denial of the Redeemer's divinity, since the need for any redemption from future damnation must vanish with the belief in freewill.

This change of front was due, above all, to the initiative of Dr. Priestley, who reprinted Collins's masterly treatise on 'Liberty and Necessity' for the instruction of his contemporaries; while at the same time he made an advance towards the French Encyclopaedists by accepting their materialism, which, however, he managed to reconcile with the Christian dogma of the resurrection. Nor was the debt all on one side. For to Priestley belongs the glory of having originated the idea of human perfectibility in its full modern sense, that is 'as the progress of the human race towards a happiness of which we

[1] Coleridge's 'Notes on English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 86.

can as yet form no conception;'[1] but a happiness to be realised on earth, and to be brought about by man's own unaided efforts, exercised with the utmost possible freedom.[2] Once started, this idea was taken up with enthusiasm by the leading intellects of France and Germany, who developed it in detail and practically put it in competition with the Christian ideas of a Fall and of a felicity reserved for glorified saints in heaven.

The Quakers of the eighteenth century, if less stirring and conspicuous than the Unitarians, made in some respects a nearer approach to pure rationalism. 'The Quakers,' says Thomas Paine, himself of Quaker parentage, 'are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the scriptures a dead letter.'[3] In fact, their rejection of the sacramental system, of clericalism in every form, implies a wide departure from the principle of authority; and the inner light which they substitute for it, while inadmissible by rationalists, often serves as a transition from traditionalism to pure reason.

How large an amount of English intellect and energy was absorbed by those two communities during the latter half of the eighteenth century is shown by the long catalogue of eminent men and women, altogether disproportionate to their numerical strength, who at that time or in the succeeding age came forth from their ranks. Among the restorers of English science Priestley takes a foremost, if not *the* foremost, place; and of the three most illustrious English physicists at the beginning of the nineteenth century two, Dalton and Young, were Quakers; while two other Quakers, Clarkson and Elizabeth Fry, stand as high among English philanthropists. Lamb and Hazlitt, first of modern English essayists, were brought up as Unitarians; and Coleridge, the most wonderful genius of his age in England, for a time adhered to the same sect. Leigh Hunt was, on the mother's side, of Quaker extraction; and his father left the Church of England to join the Universalists, whose most characteristic doctrine brings them into touch with the Unitarians.

With the French Revolution this period of compromise

[1] 'Essay on the First Principles of Government,' pp. 134–5.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 141.
[3] 'Age of Reason,' p. 135 (in Moncure Conway's edition of Paine's Works).

came for the time being to an end. I have already pointed out that the Revolution did not of itself produce the famous religious reaction of the early nineteenth century. That movement began very much earlier, and would certainly have come to a head, whatever turn events in France might have taken. What the great catastrophe did was to make the faith of the traditionalists more passionate and unreasoning, but also to make the progressists more ardent and outspoken in declaring their convictions, and more courageous in pushing them to what seemed their logical consequences. Nobody in England seems to have been made a Christian by what was happening in Paris. A few elderly gentlemen, and a few lads who came under their influence, may have been frightened into the Tory camp: but even they hardly accepted the Reign of Terror as a very strong argument for the veracity of the Gospel history. In France itself Chateaubriand, the future apostle of restored Catholicism, writing years after the fall of the monarchy, declared that no one believed in the Bible; while in Germany the rising generation, as represented by Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, would have nothing to do with Kant's ethical rehabilitation of Christianity; and whether by an independent development or under the influence of Continental thought, all the young English poets[1] advanced towards a complete rejection of religious belief.

Another effect of the Revolution was to bring rationalism more distinctly into line with democratic opinion. A certain affinity between the two orders of liberalism had been recognised in the early days of English deism; but the example of Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Frederick, Hume, and Gibbon had done much to detach freethought from its alliance with the popular cause. Even Bentham in his younger days combined strong anti-American and anti-Jacobin leanings with a thorough detestation for every kind of religion.[2] But the political exigencies of the situation in France put an end for the time to such cross-voting. The senseless anti-clerical and anti-papal measures of the National Assembly drove every Catholic priest and every layman who valued priestly ministrations into the

[1] Among whom I do not count Scott.

[2] 'Works,' Vol. X., pp. 81 and 296. Halévy, 'Le Radicalisme Philosophique,' Vol. I., p. 313.

legitimist ranks. In England the Tory cry of Church and King, and the sanction given by Wesley to the colonial policy of George III., would tend to make orthodox Whigs reconsider their theological position.

However stimulating it may have been at first, the alliance with French democracy ultimately did rationalism no good. As the old French mania for universal domination exhibited itself more and more clearly under the new masquerade of universal emancipation; subversive opinions became identified with want of patriotism. Schemes of political reform had to be postponed in presence of the more urgent necessity for protecting the liberties of England and Europe against the aggressions of France and her military dictator; and schemes of religious reform shared the same fate. Even apart from such complications, Reason found herself ill at ease among the most ignorant and turbulent elements of society. The deists of Queen Anne's time were urged by every motive of interest and sympathy to make common cause with the Whigs of the Hanoverian settlement, however much the Whig politicians might dislike being made responsible for the impieties of Toland and Collins. For Whiggism meant the right of free discussion, the control of the Church by the civil authority, the support of Holland and Germany with their liberal Protestant criticism against the reactionary Catholic intolerance of Louis XIV. It did not mean entrusting the destinies of civilisation to the mercies of a numerical majority, who would probably have voted for the restoration of James III. In America, where the revolutionary cause rested on a much broader basis of popular consent, the relative instruction, civic training, and good sense of the masses were such as might well enlist in their favour the support of men like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine. But neither the sanguinary mob of Paris nor the blind and brutal population of rural France seemed to offer serious guarantees for the steady march of enlightenment. Thus public discredit and private distrust were the inevitable consequences of becoming associated with their cause.

At this juncture the situation was saved by the appearance on the scene of a new force. The alliance of rationalism with physical science dates from about the same period as its alliance

with European democracy, and has proved a much more trustworthy support. I have indeed taken occasion to show that the destructive application of reason to religious belief was begun and carried on in complete independence of this alliance; but the very fact that there should be a widespread misconception of their historical relations shows how intimate the alliance has become in more recent times. The first to emphasise its importance among ourselves was Thomas Paine; and it is in that fact that his importance for the history of rationalism consists.

Paine's reputation as a serious controversialist has long suffered from the obloquy heaped on his name by orthodox opponents. It has in recent years been amply rehabilitated by the labours of Mr. Moncure Conway, to whom we owe a full biography of the strenuous fighter, and a complete edition of his works. Paine added nothing to the criticisms on popular Christianity already current before he was born; and his own almost unreasoned deism proves him to have lagged far behind the most advanced contemporary thought. His language about the Bible and its authors is notoriously violent; though perhaps not more violent than Cardinal Newman's attacks on the Roman Catholic Church before his conversion, or on Protestantism after his conversion. It certainly betrays a sad deficiency in what we call the historical sense. Paine cannot distinguish between legendary or mythical narratives, and false statements concocted from interested motives with the deliberate intention of deceiving. That he should adopt this violent tone in writing against Christianity, or rather that he should write against Christianity at all, showed that the period of compromise was over, that the principle of reason and the principle of authority were once more confronting one another as open and irreconcilable enemies.

This attitude was, as I have said, a result of the French Revolution, or, to speak more precisely, of the new alliance between rationalism and democracy. Destructive criticism was not now addressing itself to an academic audience, but to a class unversed in fine distinctions, understanding no controversial method but that of contumelious violence, and prepared to hear that false theological doctrines were bound up with the maintenance of iniquitous privileges.

Like the deists, Paine insists on the all-sufficiency of natural religion. But, unlike them, he associates it with the teaching of natural science. Our knowledge of the Creator and his designs is not an inheritance from the oldest traditions of mankind, but a progressive revelation which has received extraordinary accessions from modern discoveries. Among these the Copernican astronomy holds the foremost place. By suggesting that space contains innumerable worlds besides our own, it brings home to us the absurdity of supposing that the Almighty should have visited this planet to expiate by his death a trifling transgression committed by the first parents of the human race. At the same time, astronomy raises our conceptions of the Deity by disclosing the beneficent arrangements he has made for the instruction of all the inhabitants of all the worlds.

In addition to his criticisms on the Fall and the Atonement, Paine dwells much on the late origin of the Pentateuch; the atrocities committed by the Israelites, acting, as is alleged, under God's orders; the irrelevance of the Messianic prophecies; the late date and anonymity of the exilian chapters in Isaiah; the disorderly arrangement of Jeremiah; and the improbabilities of Jonah. Strangely enough, he accepts the Book of Daniel as genuine. Altogether, as far as it goes, and as against the superstitious notions then current, his attack must be pronounced successful. Many of the clergy would now go much further; and, whether as a consequence of this or of other works, a complete change of front has been adopted in the defensive tactics of all.

With certain modifications the same may be said of Paine's New Testament criticisms. They are not new; being, in fact, such as at all times would naturally occur to a reader of independent mind and strong common sense. The repeated charges of fraud and imposture brought against the Apostles and Evangelists—though never against Jesus himself—jar painfully on a modern ear. But they are largely due to the mistaken notion, shared by Paine with his orthodox contemporaries, that the Gospels and Acts were written by contemporaries and eyewitnesses of the events related. If the traditional headings of those books could be accepted as genuine, it would be hard indeed to acquit their authors of deliberate deceit; and, even as

it is, the charge is one that very serious critics have felt themselves obliged, after due consideration, to repeat against the unknown authors of some parts of the Gospel narratives.

Paine's 'Age of Reason' called forth a reply from Watson, the non-resident and freethinking Bishop of Llandaff. It is entitled 'An Apology for the Bible,' and is chiefly remembered in connexion with a naïve observation of George III. His Majesty 'was not aware that any apology was needed for that book.' The Bishop's knowledge of Biblical archaeology and of Hebrew seems to have been on a par with his sovereign's knowledge of Greek. Paine had very justly observed that the expression used of Abraham, 'pursued them even unto Dan,' could not possibly have been penned by Moses, seeing that the northern extremity of Palestine was not occupied by the tribe of Dan until some centuries after the recorded date of his death. To this Watson calmly replies that the name in question does not belong to a people but to a northern tributary of the Jordan, a river which, as is well known, derives its appellation from the fact of its being formed by the confluence of two streams, called respectively the Jor and the Dan.

An indirect but more effective reply to Paine's attack, so far at least as it bears on the New Testament, was supplied by Paley's 'Evidences.' The main object of this celebrated work was to prove (i.) that the Gospels were written by the men whose names they bear; and (ii.) that these men are to be accepted as credible witnesses because they were willing to stake their lives on the reality of the events they profess to have seen. On the first issue Paley totally failed to make good his case. On the second he came much nearer the truth than Thomas Paine. But this was of little importance, for before either of them wrote the theory of imposture had become completely discredited, although with no more advantage to Christianity than to any other of the great rival religions. Nor, admitting the absolute sincerity and profound religious conviction of the witnesses, did it follow that their stories deserved the implicit confidence claimed for them by the Cambridge apologist. For their enthusiasm rendered them exceptionally liable to delusion; and the most self-devoted enthusiasts are not celebrated for always speaking the exact truth. In some respects Paley, with his cool calculating rationality, stood farther even

than Paine from the founders of Christianity, and was even less fitted to understand the source of their convictions.

A much more effective counterblast to Paine's 'Age of Reason' than anything that either Watson or Paley could offer appeared a few years after its publication. In the history of English religious thought Wilberforce's 'Practical View of Christianity' holds a place very similar to that occupied by Chateaubriand's 'Génie du Christianisme,' and by Schleiermacher's 'Reden über die Religion,' in the religious history of France and Germany respectively. For knowledge and literary ability Wilberforce can indeed no more be compared with the brilliant French rhetorician than, for philosophical grasp and depth, with the German theologian. But his very lumbering and long-winded homily is, what he called it himself, practical; and for practical purposes it was the best possible appeal to his countrymen on behalf of religion that could be devised. It stands for the entrance of Evangelicalism, as a great religious and social force, on the scene of public life.

The religious revival of the eighteenth century had in England organised itself under the form of two schools, of which one broke off from the established Church, while the other remained within its pale. The Nonconformist division branched into the various sects of Methodists. The Anglican division, numerically much the weaker, and long without any bond of union except what was created by common convictions, but destined ultimately to exercise a more powerful influence on men's minds, became known as the Evangelical school, and still exists under that name. With few exceptions the wealth, rank, and intellect of the country were nearly as hostile to them as to the schism headed by Wesley and Whitfield. But the period of obloquy ended with the accession of William Wilberforce to their ranks. In adopting Evangelical principles he threw over them the prestige of his brilliant parliamentary and social position, a prestige still further enhanced when his long and laborious efforts to free England from her unhappy responsibility for the African slave-trade were at last crowned with success. It was while still engaged in that glorious struggle, but without any reference to the interests involved in it, that he published his 'Practical View.'

Unlike his great Continental contemporaries, Wilberforce does not come forward—except in the most incidental manner—to defend Christianity against its theoretical impugners. That part of the work had, in his opinion, been sufficiently done by Paley, whom he mentions, though not by name, in terms of high admiration. Besides, infidelity does not strike him as a very formidable enemy. There is not much of it in England, and what there is he attributes to moral depravity.[1] It is a disease of the heart rather than of the head.[2] The literary assailants of Christianity, from Lord Herbert to Hume, have been seldom read, and are now forgotten. But for Leland their very names would be unknown. What alarms Wilberforce is the profound misconception of Christianity prevalent among the upper and middle classes, their absolute ignorance of what is implied in the religion they profess to believe. There is a fatal habit of distinguishing Christian morals from Christian doctrines, with the result that doctrine has almost vanished from view. We are told not to ask what a man believes, but to look at what he does. For a century past the pulpits of the Church of England have been chiefly devoted to preaching up mere morality; and the popular novelists, who most faithfully reflect the spirit of the age, give us the same idea of its tendencies. With the solitary exception of Richardson, they never make their religious characters allude to specifically Christian doctrines. And this morality is of an irreligious type. Men's standard of right and wrong is not the standard of the Gospel. Principles are advanced altogether opposite to the genius and character of Christianity.[3] The guilt of bad actions is measured, not by their offensiveness to God, but by their injuriousness to society.[4] Amiability and usefulness are substituted for religion,[5] the observances of which have indeed become so distasteful to the generality that business itself seems recreation in comparison with them.[6] In short, no more is expected from a good Christian than from a good deist, Mussulman, or Hindoo.[7]

In opposition to this cheerful and tolerant optimism Wilberforce reminds his readers that the recognition of human

[1] 'Practical View,' p. 472.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 474.
[3] P. 12.
[4] P. 236.
[5] P. 247.
[6] P. 197.
[7] P. 24.

nature as corrupt lies at the root of all true religion,[1] and is eminently the basis and groundwork of Christianity. In proof of this depravity he appeals to the experience of mankind in all ages, all countries, and all orders of civilisation; but above all to the testimony of the watchful, diligent, self-denying Christian who has become deeply sensible of the fact by observing what passes in his own heart.[2]

How such a position can be reconciled with the Christian doctrine of regeneration, whether granted at baptism or at some other period of the believer's life, does not appear. In this, as in other respects, Wilberforce's view offers a striking parallel to that put forward by Kant a few years earlier in his essay on Religion, with which the English writer can hardly have been acquainted, even by report. But the coincidence ceases to surprise when we remember that it is due to a common derivation. Whether this doctrine of human depravity is or is not the foundation of all religion, it is at any rate the foundation of that peculiar religion which we call Pietism. As such it was taught to Kant by the Pietists, among whom he grew up. And it came to Wilberforce, though less directly, through the same source. For the Wesleyan movement was essentially a German importation. It arose from the direction given to Wesley's thoughts by his intercourse with the Moravians, a Pietistic sect, whence it passed to the Evangelical school within the Church of England. At the same time English religious thought was being stimulated by the works of William Law, latterly a disciple of Jacob Behmen, in whom the same sense of human nothingness took the form of a more generalised mysticism.

From this consciousness of innate depravity follows, according to the usual logic of theology, the necessity of a redeemer, and the recognition of Christ as having fulfilled that office, to which a God alone was adequate. He has redeemed us by his atoning sufferings and death, with the resulting obligation of inexhaustible gratitude to him and to the Father for having provided such a means of expiation for our sins. Wilberforce, be it observed, takes the strictly penal view of Christ's death on the cross as having been accepted in lieu of the punishment justly due to the disobedience of mankind;[3] nor does he seem to be aware that objections, not necessarily

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 24. [2] P. 36. [3] P. 332.

proceeding from a bad heart, but based on the purest principles of justice, have been raised to such a theory.

To believe in the radical corruption of his own heart; to believe that such corruption would be rightly punished by an eternity of suffering; to believe that the chance of redemption from that fate has been offered by the death in torment of an innocent and divine victim;—these, according to Wilberforce, are the indispensable credentials of the claim to be called a Christian. But these of themselves are not enough. They must be accompanied by a firm resolution to remain in the path of duty by whatever temptations to the contrary he may be assailed. And even that is not enough. The hardest part has yet to come. Visions of the unseen world, as revealed to us in Scripture, must ever be uppermost in his thoughts and reign over his affections to the subordination of every other interest and passion;[1] while as an accompaniment and safeguard of this mystical self-devotion he must foster an unsleeping sense of his own radical corruption and inherent weakness. Some attention must, of course, be paid to the world's affairs if we are to go on living at all. But there is one day in the week when the world must be totally shut out from our thoughts.[2] It does not appear whether Wilberforce pushed his sabbatarianism to the same degree of intolerance as the later Evangelicals. But his exhortations point in that direction; and his denunciation of all theatrical exhibitions, the Opera included, are uncompromising in their severity.[3]

From this point of view it is evidently not enough to acquiesce unfeignedly in every dogma, and to fulfil the acknowledged obligations of morality with unfailing diligence. A perfectly orthodox believer, leading a highly honourable, useful, and innocent life, may still be no better than a castaway, if piety is not his ruling passion. 'God requires us to set up his throne in the heart, and to reign in it without a rival.' 'He who bowed the knee to the god of medicine or of eloquence was no less an idolater than he who worshipped the deified patrons of lewdness or of theft.'[4] Apparently a William Herschel or a John Hunter, a Reynolds or a Walter Scott, nay, even Wilberforce's own friend and leader, Pitt (who had no time to

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 188.
[2] Pp. 193 *sqq.*
[3] Pp. 306 and 318.
[4] P. 177.

go to church), were doomed to the same fate, as Louis XV. or George, Prince of Wales, were as guilty before God as any slave-trader or any capitalist who was working little children to death in his factories.

The truth is that all consistent mysticism looks on the self-assertion of individual existence as an offence against the absoluteness of the All-One; and mysticism, as we have seen, counts among the great tap-roots of religious belief. But the genuine mystic has a large charity for individuality unknown to the mere religionist, who falsifies his passion for unity by just that admixture of reason which converts it from an ecstasy into a logical contradiction. For nothing could derogate more from the all-comprehensiveness of God than the everlasting survival of his enemies, whether in hell or anywhere else.

While addressing himself primarily to the high aristocratical society in which he moved, and while pointing to the disastrous consequences of a laxity like theirs, or even worse than theirs, in 'a neighbouring country,' Wilberforce well knows where the strongest support for his reactionary views is to be expected. He appeals to the most ignorant and passionate classes, to the lower orders and to women. Originally addressed to the poor and simple, the Gospel still finds the readiest acceptance and the most faithful adherence among them.[1] And the distinctly emotional religion which he advocates is alone fitted for them, as they must be acted upon by their feelings or not at all.[2] The female sex, too, seems by the very constitution of its nature to be more favourably disposed than ours towards the feelings and offices of religion;[3]—a providential arrangement, as Wilberforce observes, with an unexpected gleam of worldly shrewdness; for it leaves men more free to apply their minds to business.

Nevertheless, just as Pietism in Germany had remained a religion for counts, so in England Evangelicalism always retained a certain aristocratic stamp, and never really got at the masses, who preferred listening to their Methodist preachers. But from the beginning of the nineteenth century it made steady progress among the upper classes and their hangers-on.

Sabbatarianism had assuredly not been a characteristic of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 129. [2] P. 409. [3] P. 434.

our statesmen in the preceding period. 'Not only was Sunday the common day for Cabinet Councils, but the very hours of its morning service were frequently appointed for political interviews and conferences.[1]' Pitt, as I have said, could not find time to go to church, nor indeed any time for religion at all. But Perceval, who held the premiership only a few years later, might be seen any Sunday walking to Hampstead church with his dozen children; and we are told that he objected to convoking Parliament on a Monday on the ground that it might induce gentlemen to travel on Sunday; while the great crisis of England's fate left him free to attend to hassocks, psalters, and surplices.[2] Earl Stanhope, the historian, mentions having been told by 'the Lord Lieutenant and for many years the representative of one of the Midland Shires,' that when he came of age there were only two landed gentlemen in his county who had family prayers, whilst at present (1850) there are, he believes, scarcely two that have not.[3]

Still, the custom of holding family prayers, however universal it became, did not preclude a marked distinction as regards their real or professed beliefs between the two great political parties, or at least between the leading men on either side. Since the French Revolution Whig statesmanship has become more closely associated than before with the removal or relaxation of religious disabilities, Tory statesmanship with their maintenance and, if possible, their extension. And on the Whig side this attitude encouraged a certain laxity of opinion, sometimes amounting to complete absence of religious belief, or even hostility to religion. Fox was 'no believer in religion;' Lord and Lady Holland apparently much the same. Their private physician and confidential adviser, John Allen, known as 'Lady Holland's atheist,' used to start anti-religious conversations at the dinner-table of Holland House.[4] Romilly, who began the work of reforming our atrocious criminal code, 'agreed with every tittle' of Bentham's 'Church-of-Englandism,'[5] a work ostensibly directed against the Church Catechism alone,

[1] Mahon's 'History of England,' Vol. VII., p. 320.
[2] Harriet Martineau's 'History of England' (1800–1815), p. 251.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 320.
[4] 'Greville Memoirs,' Pt. I., Vol. III., p. 324.
[5] Bain's 'James Mill,' p. 452.

but saturated with the author's well-known hostility to all Christianity. Sir James Mackintosh, who succeeded to Romilly's position as a law reformer, seems only to have been reconciled to Christianity on his death-bed.[1] Lord Melbourne, Earl Grey's successor as head of the Whig party, although greatly interested in theology, 'believed nothing.'[2] Sir Francis Burdett was 'what in these days would be called an Agnostic.'[3]

When the party changed its name from Whig to Liberal the established tradition remained, in this respect, for a time unbroken. Among clerical circles at Oxford the Liberals had the worst reputation for infidelity, and their advent to power in 1830 caused great dismay. 'The majority of our Liberal rulers,' writes Thomas Mozley, 'believed neither in miracle, nor revelation, nor a personal Deity.'[4] 'Most of the Liberal statesmen believed the Bible to be a fabric of lies.'[5] Mozley gives the impression of habitual exaggeration; but even after large deductions his statements remain significant, and they are substantially confirmed by O'Connell's complaint to Haydon the painter about the infidelity of the Liberals, which he considered a great mistake, as it alienated from them the sympathies of the Irish people.[6]

As for the Tories, Perceval, their sometime chief, has been already sufficiently characterised; Canning in private gave evidence of sincere piety, as also did Wilson Croker. The heads of the Clapham School were originally Tories, and continued to be so until the logic of their emancipating policy drove them over to the party of liberty. Gladstone began as a high Tory; and the sympathies of Lord Shaftesbury seem on the whole to have been on that side, although from motives of political opportunism he sometimes co-operated with their rivals.

In literature the contrast is even greater. The 'Edinburgh Review,' the great literary organ of the Whigs, is said to have

[1] Greville, *ut supra*.

[2] *Ibid.* Elsewhere Greville describes Melbourne as having 'never arrived at any fixed belief' ('Memoirs,' Pt. II., Vol. III., p. 248); but then his political principles are described as equally unfixed.

[3] 'Reminiscences of Mrs. De Morgan,' p. 12.

[4] 'Reminiscences,' Vol. II., p. 206.

[5] P. 265.

[6] Haydon's 'Autobiography,' pp. 351–2.

been 'esoterically indifferent to revealed religion.'[1] Godwin, whose 'Political Justice' represents the extreme Radical position, was first an atheist, then a sort of mystical pantheist. Hazlitt, as is clear from his essay 'on the Fear of Death,' did not believe in a future life. Leigh Hunt professed some vague form of religion very far removed from orthodox Christianity. Byron, a staunch and even prejudiced Whig, was a deist; Shelley, a more advanced political reformer, an atheist. Campbell the poet, a good Liberal, is described as 'very doubtful of the reality of another life.'[2]

On the other hand, the most illustrious man of letters in the Tory party, Sir Walter Scott, seems to have been personally a sincere believer, although the tendency of his novels is certainly not to favour Christianity in any form. Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, in adopting reactionary politics, also returned to the theology which, as republicans, they had discarded. Croker and Professor Wilson, together with the Tory organs over which they presided, the 'Quarterly Review' and 'Blackwood's Magazine,' were professed champions of orthodox Christianity.[3]

It must not, however, be supposed that this division of opinion between the leaders in politics and literature corresponded to a proportionate division in the country. Outside London there seems to have been an overwhelming majority on the orthodox side; and as for London, although Macaulay told the Wilberforces in 1826 that 'not two hundred men there believed in the Bible,'[4] besides allowing for the habitual exaggeration both of the speaker and of his reporter, Thomas Mozley, we must suppose that the unbelievers, whatever were their actual numbers, must have included many who were rather indifferent than hostile to religion. At any rate, the public opinion of the country, taking it altogether, was so distinctly adverse to infidelity that even in London it allowed severe sentences to be passed on a bookseller's shopmen because they sold Paine's

[1] Cory's 'Guide to Modern English History,' Vol. II., p. 8.

[2] 'Reminiscences of Mrs. De Morgan,' p. 118. Bentham and his school must be reserved for fuller discussion hereafter; here it will be enough to say that they were opposed to all religion.

[3] I speak of Wilson in his official capacity. In private he seems to have expressed complete disbelief in religion.

[4] Mozley's 'Reminiscences,' Vol. I., p. 107.

'Age of Reason;' that the Liberal leaders had to conceal their contempt for the popular creed under a mask of respectful deference or even acquiescence; and that the intellectual leaders, with the single exception of Shelley in his youth, never published anything about religion under their own names, whilst their works on other subjects gave only obscure intimations of what they thought on this momentous subject.

At the close of the eighteenth century it had still seemed uncertain which direction public opinion in England would take. Wilberforce does not seem to think that unbelief, or at least reasoned unbelief, was on the increase. But Robert Hall, the great Baptist preacher, who probably had better means of observing than the amiable statesman, took a more gloomy view. He is alarmed at 'the rapid increase of irreligion among the polite and fashionable, and descending (*sic*) of late to the lower classes.'[1] Additional evidence is afforded by the threatened collapse of Unitarianism. I have noticed how this sect rose into sudden significance as one of the compromises between orthodoxy and rationalism temporarily adopted by the English intellect—a significance fully appreciated by Wilberforce, who calls it 'a halfway house to infidelity.'[2] And while the revolutionary fever lasted it shared the fate of other compromises. Complaints arose of the great scarcity of Unitarian ministers, most of the young men at their chief training college having turned infidels;[3] while such young converts as Coleridge and Southey soon abandoned the halfway house for pantheism or atheism.

Perhaps we can best understand the shifting currents of religious belief in that perplexed and vacillating age by observing how they were reflected and represented in the mind of one of its bravest and most virile personalities, the poet Wordsworth. We who are most familiar with the tradition of his peaceful and honoured old age are accustomed to look on this grand figure as the very type of reaction in politics and religion, in all things the very antipodes of Shelley, as one whose 'Tintern Abbey' must be read in the light, or rather quenched in the gloom, of his 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets.' But

[1] 'Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson,' Vol. I., p. 51.
[2] 'Practical View,' p. 479.
[3] Cottle's 'Early Recollections of Coleridge,' Vol. I., p. 177.

we should not forget that to young Robert Browning Wordsworth was still the 'lost leader,' the apostate democrat, who not long before had been fighting on the same side with Burns and Shelley; as for Shelley himself, the 'poet of nature' had not long ceased to be the weaver of 'songs consecrate to truth and liberty'; while Charles Lamb, again, felt no less surprise on hearing of Wordsworth's conversion to Christianity than a similar announcement with regard to Mr. Swinburne would excite at the present day. That change, at least, in Wordsworth's attitude, could hardly be accounted for either by a 'handful of silver' or a decorative title.

Nor can the transformation be explained by such a reaction against the principles of the French Revolution as drove Mackintosh into the arms of Burke, and Canning into the ministry of Pitt. If Wordsworth lost his youthful hopes of a great and sudden renovation of human society, he did not surrender with them the more sober anticipation of a gradual improvement to be effected by such prosaic means as parliamentary reform, or the establishment of popular schools like those which had long flourished in Scotland. In fact, not long before the end of the great war he still held what one of his noble friends described as 'terrific democratic opinions.'[1] And this liberality in politics was accompanied by a corresponding breadth in his religious opinions. The poet of liberty was also, in Shelley's sense, the poet of truth. At the time of his most intimate association with Coleridge, Wordsworth neither was, nor affected to be, a Christian. He 'loved and venerated Christ and Christianity,'[2] but that was all. As the two friends disagreed on this subject, they habitually avoided it. On the other hand, they conversed long and earnestly together about Spinoza; and both agreed with him in accepting the doctrine of philosophical necessity, which Wordsworth, according to Coleridge, 'pushed even to extravagance.'[3] And, if we may judge from a famous passage in 'Tintern Abbey,' the poet of nature seems at that time to have accepted Spinoza's pantheism also, finding in it not only a stimulus for his aesthetic susceptibilities, but even more than that, a support for his moral convictions.

[1] Haydon's 'Autobiography,' Vol. I., p. 125.
[2] Coleridge's 'Letters,' p. 246.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 454.

It is true that the passage to which I refer does not in terms deny the personality of God, and so it has frequently been accepted by orthodox believers as an expression of theistic devotion. Fortunately Wordsworth has not left us in the dark as to this point. In the preface to his 'Excursion' (1814) he quotes a passage from his still unpublished and never completed poem, 'The Recluse,' as a kind of prospectus for the whole vast trilogy of which they were to form the second and third parts respectively, in which the following lines occur :—

> 'All strength, all terror, singly or in bands,
> That ever was put forth in personal form—
> Jehovah with his thunder and the choir
> Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal throne—
> I pass them unalarmed.'

His friend Crabb Robinson understood this as suggesting that all notions about the personality of God are but attempts to individualise notions concerning Mind; but wondered how one so ignorant of German philosophy as Wordsworth could rise to such a height of speculation.[1] There seems, however, to be no real difficulty about the matter. If the poet had not read Fichte and Schelling, he had read their masters, Plato and Spinoza—to say nothing of his conversations with Coleridge. Nor, apart from such teachers, was he incapable of making out pantheism for himself, as clever children have been known to do.

The great 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality' is obviously Platonic rather than Christian in tone, and dwells far more on the soul's pre-existence than on her survival. Nor should we press the Platonic notion of immortality into the implication of an eternally surviving individual consciousness. According to Wordsworth, the apprehension of the highest truths makes our lives seem but moments in an 'eternal silence.' It is not we ourselves that are immortal, but the vast sea of absolute existence, the All-One, which 'brought us hither,' and whose presence stands revealed to us in moments of supreme ecstasy. 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,' 'deep buried in the silent tomb,' beyond the reach of all vicissitude, the dead have neither motion nor sentiency of their own, and only little children can really think of them as still living. The first

[1] 'Diary,' Vol. I., p. 465.

book of the 'Excursion' reads the same lesson in still plainer language. There is no other consolation for Margaret's tragic fate than that 'she sleeps in the calm earth.' Though she is dead, the weeds and the spear-grass spring up in inexhaustible luxuriance, conveying an image of tranquillity into the heart, and making us feel that change and ruin are mere shows of Being, not Being itself, and the grief that is felt for them an idle dream.

As was to be expected, Wordsworth's 'Excursion' was denounced by the 'Eclectic Review' for putting Nature in the place of God.[1] In view of such utterances we can understand the incredulity of his old friends when they heard that he had become a Christian. Lamb wrote to ask him if it was true. The touch of so great a humourist seems to have evoked an unwonted flash from one not much addicted to epigram. Wordsworth replied, 'when I am a good man then I am a Christian.'[2] A religion so qualified and limited would hardly have satisfied the requirements of Wilberforce. It savours too strongly of that heathen morality with which the divines of the previous century had sought to identify their creed.

The change probably began with his conversion from necessitarianism, which had been effected at a comparatively early period by the arguments of Coleridge. But the passage from the 'Recluse,' reaffirmed as is its sentiment in the preface to the 'Excursion,' proves that the acceptance of freewill did not with him, any more than with Coleridge, involve the abandonment of that pantheistic religion which, as we shall see hereafter, was at this time held also by the philosopher-poet. Another development, which may or may not be due to the same influence, is indicated by a strange ardour of devotion to the Church of England. When on a visit to London in 1812, Wordsworth astonished his friends by telling them that, although he never entered a church in his own country, he would shed his blood for the Establishment.[3] Pantheism easily lends itself to such subsidised arrangements for giving a splendid and decorous embodiment to the felt community

[1] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. I., p. 468.

[2] Allsop's 'Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge,' Vol. I., p. 205.

[3] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. I., p. 389.

of every individual soul, however humble, with the absolute One, conceived under a personified expression. But from this distant approval to the complete outward conformity of Wordsworth's later years the change is much more marked, and needs to be explained by the pressure of urgent practical considerations.

The tragic accompaniments of the Revolution did not, as I have said, produce any general reaction against its underlying principles. Indeed, those principles at first rather gained than lost in popularity by the vigour with which the soldiers of the Republic defended them. Burke's prediction of the ruin that would befall France as a nemesis for the abandonment of her ancient institutions had, so far, been signally falsified by the consolidation and extension of her military power. And her new civil institutions had proved perfectly compatible with the maintenance—even the too rigid maintenance—of law and order. It seemed absurd to go on calling Bonaparte 'the child and champion of Jacobinism' when he was coming out in the character of its most vigilant and determined enemy. At the same time, his aggressively imperialist policy had given a new actuality to the old rhetoric about liberty, to the traditional phrases about patriotism, inherited from the city-states of classical antiquity. Hence, during the second war with France the difference between political parties in England seemed almost effaced. As against the common enemy of freedom, all were liberals and patriots, as all were loyalists alike. When Scott observed, with a slight note of censure, that Fox had 'died a Briton,' he could point to no real change in the attitude of that illustrious champion of humanity. The cause for which Nelson fell was essentially identical with that which triumphed at Saratoga and Jemmapes. And it was only through the liberal impulse communicated by Fox that the Pittite Wilberforce succeeded in carrying the abolition of the African slave-trade against a coalition of plutocratic and courtly influences.

What policy Fox would have pursued had his life been prolonged into the new conditions of European policy we cannot tell. But we know that his death was followed by a period when, if the Whigs were the party of domestic reform, the

Tories were the party of European liberty, supporting by arms the oppressed nationalities of the Continent, and above all of the Iberian peninsula, in their struggle against Napoleon; while Napoleon himself, by his Austrian marriage, was definitely ranging himself on the side of legitimist reaction. And even in home affairs Liberalism was by no means under a ban. When the Prince of Wales assumed the Regency in 1810, it was expected that the Whigs would take office; and perhaps, but for their own obstinacy, they might on that occasion have secured a share of power much in excess of their absolute number and influence in the country. But such an event would not have seriously altered the general course of affairs. No very marked difference separated them from the Tories, except on the question of Catholic Emancipation; and some of the leading Tories, such as Castlereagh and Canning, supported Emancipation. Had it been carried in the first year of the Regency, a great act of justice would have been performed with a good grace; but the presence of some fifty nominees of the Irish priests, or, what was more likely, of the Irish landlords, could hardly have contributed much to the passage of truly Liberal measures through the House of Commons, and nothing to their passage through the Lords.

As for public opinion outside Parliament, it seems to have been on the whole enlightened and progressive during the continuance of the war. The new discoveries in science and the new departures in literature were received with instantaneous appreciation; while the theories on which they rested were expounded to large and enthusiastic audiences at the Royal Institution and elsewhere. A general wish was felt for the wider diffusion of education; it was admitted that new machinery must be provided for the purpose; and the respective merits of the systems proposed by Bell, on the side of the Church, and by Lancaster, on the side of the Dissenters, were everywhere debated with passionate interest.

How little way religious reaction had as yet made in English public opinion is strikingly shown by the success of Maria Edgeworth as a writer of didactic stories for young people. This powerful authoress is as well known for the moral tendency of her fiction, as for her deliberate ignoring of religious motives in the determination of conduct. One would think, indeed,

that she wished to show, as against Wilberforce's 'Practical View,' that the value of human actions lies solely in their tendency to promote human happiness in this world. The Evangelicals saw this perfectly, and represented her as recommending virtue on the ground of merely selfish interest. But this is an entire misconception of her ethical method. It is true that, in accordance with the tradition of what used to be called poetical justice, Miss Edgeworth takes care that her good characters shall receive ultimate compensation for their temporary trials, and that the vicious or weak shall suffer for their faults. But the motive for rectitude is never self-interest; those who are proposed as objects for our imitation are actuated solely by such an unadulterated regard for the moral law as Kant himself might have prescribed; and the fatal results of allowing even the most amiable considerations to interfere with it are fully set out.[1]

Crowned with the laurels of victory, crowned with the myrtle and ivy of a new and romantic youth, England in 1815 stood forth before Europe in a prouder position than she had ever filled before, even under Elizabeth, or Cromwell, or Chatham, supreme alike in the arts of war and peace. And a prophet might have felt justified in predicting that the general pacification would inaugurate, at least for her, an era of still greater enlightenment, and still more rapid progress towards an ideal of purely human perfection. With the lightening of taxation, the restoration to life-giving energies of funds so long devoted to the work of destruction, and the renewal of fruitful intercourse between English and Continental thought, it might seem as if the dreams of Priestley and Kant, of Condorcet and Godwin, were now at last on the way to be realised.

If such hopes existed, they were destined, at least for a time, to be bitterly disappointed. Hazlitt and Byron and Shelley were no doubt mistaken when they talked as if the cause which succumbed at Waterloo was the cause of European liberty. But it cannot be denied that for some time appearances were in their favour. On the Continent the peoples who had taken up arms for their legitimate rulers on a promise of receiving constitutional government saw themselves tricked

[1] Above all in 'Helen.'

out of the expected boon; and the system of gloomy repression which set in was none the less exasperating for being conducted under unctuous professions of evangelical piety. In England the withdrawal of the artificial stimulus given to the national industries by a vast naval and military expenditure; the inheritance of a huge debt whose accumulation had involved a proportionate destruction of capital; the closure of foreign markets owing to the impoverishment of other nations; and the steady substitution of machinery for hand-labour, brought about a period of economical distress, which pressed with peculiar severity on the poorest classes. Their discontent showed itself in riotous demonstrations, which were put down with merciless rigour, and in a literature of sedition which called forth new laws for the repression of free speech.

The situation offered a superficial resemblance to that which, thirty years before, had preceded and announced the bursting of the revolutionary tempest in France; a like event seemed impending here also; and in view of such a catastrophe, wise men might be excused for thinking that the duty of all good citizens was to strengthen the political and ecclesiastical authorities, with whose maintenance the dearest interests of civilisation seemed to be bound up. And as philosophical infidelity generally passed for having brought about the French Revolution, so now in England the reaction against rationalism for the first time assumed formidable proportions. What people called infidelity—a term sometimes so stretched as to cover the most certain results of modern Biblical criticism[1]—fell into disrepute, and its professors were held in abhorrence by the people at large;[2] with the result that the mere negation of religion 'became a firm bond of union among men who agreed in nothing else.'[3] This disrepute soon extended to physical science, or at least to geology, which was regarded with suspicion among the higher classes as opposed to revealed religion; even Sir Humphry Davy, who had become their toady, enlisting himself among the obscurantists.[4] Conversely the Roman Catholic Church received sympathetic recognition both in

[1] Coleridge's 'Notes on English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 333.
[2] Coleridge's 'Church and State,' p. 183.
[3] John Morley's 'Miscellanies,' Vol. III., p. 50. The words are J. S. Mill's.
[4] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. II., p. 273.

Parliament and in the pulpit as 'a right dear though erring sister';[1] while former attempts at a reconciliation with the Papacy were recalled with high approval. Finally, at a time of bitter financial distress, a million sterling was voted for building new churches; the grant being subsequently supplemented by another half million.[2]

A more subtle indication of the new drift in public opinion, and also a fresh illustration of the English tendency to compromise, is furnished by the return of Unitarianism to something like its former importance. According to Coleridge, writing in 1817, it had at that time taken the place formerly occupied by deism;[3] and just as formerly many had secretly held deistical opinions under a mask of orthodoxy, so now the number of those who in other denominations held Unitarian opinions was tenfold greater than that of its professed adherents.

Such was the political and religious reaction which determined Wordsworth's whole later attitude towards contemporary life and thought. It had, as the dates prove, but a remote and indirect connexion with the French Revolution; and so we can easily understand how the poet's youthful liberalism could survive down to the close of the great war. From a literary point of view, this was fortunate; for the love of liberty and of pure naturalism formed so integral an element in his genius that it at once sank to mediocrity under the yoke of another allegiance. The 'high and tender Muses,' who, in his pantheistic days, had inspired the poet with immortal thoughts and images and words, frowned on the composition of his 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets.' Among all the countless phrases with which he has enriched the English language I cannot find that they have yielded one. Among all the quotations from him occurring in our literature one at most can be traced to them.[4] Out of the three series, numbering altogether 117 sonnets, Matthew Arnold has only considered three worthy of a place in his selection. Sometimes, though rarely, the dreary waste of prose is lit up by a gleam of the old fire. But it will be

[1] Coleridge's 'Church and State,' p. 143.
[2] Sir Spencer Walpole's 'History of England,' Vol. I., p. 388.
[3] Coleridge's 'Church and State, etc.,' p. 373.
[4] 'Sleeps the future as a snake enrolled coil within coil.'

found on examination that the few poetic passages or lines have nothing to do with Church history or theology. They relate to beautiful scenery, or to human love, or to the glories of science and art.[1]

Wordsworth has no claim to the title of an original thinker; nor is even his theory of poetical composition worked out with any logical power. His political and religious opinions were borrowed in every phase of their evolution from those about him —probably in the first instance from Coleridge. Accordingly, whichever side he took, they were marked by a fanaticism, not characteristic of the really independent enquirer, and aided, in his instance, by an enormous self-esteem. This makes him all the more fitted to supply us with a provisional clue in feeling our way through the intricate and ill-understood windings of English opinion in the earlier years of the century. But to unravel the more intimate structure and evolution of English thought as then constituted, we must study it in the mind of one who, whatever his failings, brought to bear a more comprehensive intellect on a larger mass of information, a wider range of ideas, and a more extended key-board of emotion, than any Englishman then living.

I have named Coleridge; and it is to an examination of Coleridge's opinions and influence in their bearing on the history of English rationalism that the next chapter must be devoted.

[1] Part I., xxix., the whole sextet; xxxv., second half of the octave; Part II., iii., last three lines; xvi., second half of the octave; xxi., second half of the octave; Part III., xxxiii. (the famous sonnet on King's College Chapel), the whole sextet.

CHAPTER VI

COLERIDGE

VARIOUS lives of Coleridge have been written; but, so far as I am aware, no history of his religious opinions exists; nor is there even any systematic account of what those opinions were in their settled, or at least their ultimate form.[1] The materials for such an account are, however, sufficiently abundant, although of a somewhat fragmentary and elusive character. They consist of passages in his correspondence, scraps of conversation with friends, marginal notes on theological and other books, with some help from his published works. If the total view, or rather impression, gained by a collection of these various sources lacks clearness and cohesion, we may console ourselves with the reflexion that what Coleridge himself thought, or believed, or believed that he believed, matters little as compared with what younger men under his influence came to believe as the substance of what they supposed to be his genuine doctrine. And for the purpose of this history it must interest us above all to ascertain how that influence affected their attitude, in the way of attraction or repulsion towards the leading points of the popular religion.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was the youngest son

[1] At the time when Dr. Hort wrote on the subject in the 'Cambridge Essays' important documents, such as Crabb Robinson's 'Diary' and Coleridge's 'Letters,' had not yet been published. His view is therefore so incomplete and one-sided as to be practically almost worthless. James Martineau's study is disappointingly meagre and obscure. No other critic of adequate learning and ability has since attempted the task. In what follows I have adopted the comparatively simple and unpretending method of stating Coleridge's opinions in his own words, with as much connecting commentary as was required to make them intelligible—in so far as they admit of any intelligible construction whatever.

of an eccentric and devout clergyman in Devonshire. At an early age he lost his mother, the only human being who ever fully responded to his affectionate and demonstrative nature. His brothers and sisters were not sympathetic; and his instincts were still further repressed by the rigid discipline of Christ's Hospital, where he was educated under a headmaster of exceptional severity, to whom, however, he considered himself deeply indebted for intellectual guidance. There, among other advanced books, the boy got hold of Voltaire's 'Philosophical Dictionary,' and, as a consequence of his precocious studies, publicly declared himself an infidel. We are not told at what age this profession of unfaith was made; but at any rate he was still young enough to be flogged out of it by Dr. Boyer. Coleridge in after life spoke of this flogging, which was one of many, as the only one he ever deserved. At least its effect was never obliterated; for even when holding opinions at which Voltaire would have shuddered, he never ceased to describe himself as an excellent Christian.

As an undergraduate at Cambridge he came under the influence of William Frend,[1] who was tried in the Vice-Chancellor's Court and sentenced to expulsion from the University for the publication of radical and Unitarian opinions. Coleridge himself subsequently joined the Unitarians to the extent of occasionally preaching in their chapels. How long the connexion lasted is not clear. He speaks of it somewhere as having terminated in sixteen months; but this, while possibly true in a strict sense, would be a considerable understatement of the time over which his general sympathy with their position extended; for, writing to a Unitarian minister in 1802, he speaks of the Unitarians and Quakers as the only real Christians. What eventually alienated Coleridge from them was, according to his friend and confidant, Thomas Allsop, the moral character of the sect. He accused them of insincerity, selfishness, and moral cowardice[2]—charges which strike one as rather odd, coming from such a source. Their acceptance of the economic doctrines then taught, and especially of Malthusianism, also contributed largely to his dislike.

But differences going to the very root of morals and religion

[1] Father of Mrs. De Morgan, the celebrated mathematician's wife.

[2] Allsop, Vol. I., p. 60.

must at all times have put the young philosopher out of sympathy with the Socinians, as he persisted in calling the community after he forsook it. The doctrine of Original Sin, even more than the Trinity or the Incarnation, was a scandal in their eyes. Now Coleridge, writing to his brother George in April, 1798, declares himself a most steadfast believer in original sin, that is to say, in the inherent depravity of human nature. And for this disease he pronounces the *spirit* of the Gospel to be the sole cure; adding, however, that he looks for it 'neither in the mountain nor at Jerusalem.'[1]

What he means is that our performances and efforts fall short—often very far short—of our ideals. No one knew this better or from a more intimate personal experience than Coleridge, in whom an exceptionally weak will and an exceptionally slothful temperament went along with an almost superhuman strength of intellect and imagination. Not having been spoiled by indulgence from others either at home or at school, his conscience was all the more sensitively awake to the viciousness of the self-indulgence which he habitually practised when released from external restraint. This constitutional weakness of will was aggravated at an early period by the habit of opium-eating, begun in 1796 as a relief from physical suffering, and continued, as he alleges, from the same motive, though latterly to a less excessive degree, till near the close of his life. And the desire to satisfy his growing appetite for this expensive stimulant superinduced on his character the additional vices of unjustifiable extravagance, evasion of pecuniary obligations, and deceit habitually practised in order to elude the watch placed on him by his own desire.

One can understand, then, that the sense of sin, conceived as an overwhelming fatality, should have been particularly active with Coleridge. It is less intelligible that he should have generalised this deep and well-founded consciousness of his own delinquencies into a comprehensive indictment of human nature as such; and that he should have regarded the spirit of the Gospel as a cure for the world at large when it was proving so totally inoperative in his own particular instance. Looking no further than his own contemporaries, the heroic examples of Wordsworth, Southey, Scott, and Lamb might have given him

[1] 'Letters,' pp. 241–2.

more encouraging ideas of what human nature could achieve in the way of high and consistent moral worth—could even achieve without invoking supernatural assistance; for Wordsworth was not in his best years a Christian, while Lamb remained a sceptic to the last. As it happens, also, he who so vilified human nature owed nearly everything to the disinterested kindness not of friends only, but oftener of chance acquaintances or complete strangers, attracted by pity for his misfortunes and admiration for his splendid genius.

Yet, though surrounded by so much affection, Coleridge remained unsatisfied and insatiate. 'Why,' he exclaims, 'why was I born for love, and love denied to me?' His need, indeed, for love, and his ardent response to its first manifestations constituted, perhaps, more than any intellectual brilliancy, the secret of that wonderful charm which was exercised on all whom he approached. But, unlike that of which Wordsworth heard a turtle-dove sing, the passion with him began quickly and soon ended; like Laodamia, though strong in love, he was all too weak in self-control, and without that soul-depth which the gods approve: the least friction, the least disappointment, brought on a crisis of violent revulsion and estrangement.

To such temperaments as this the very conditions of individual existence, with its limitations of extent and duration, become intolerable. They pine for reabsorption in the super-essential One of Neo-Platonism, which is also the supreme Good: and they conceive creation under the allegory of a Fall, an apostasy from their primal unity, of spirits infected with the original sin of self-will, the desire to set up for themselves, to constitute a world in space and time. And their redemption from that world of bitter disillusion must be effected through a divine sacrifice, infinite in self-surrender to the supreme Will as the crime of self-assertion which demanded such a propitiation was infinite in its guilt.

As a schoolboy Coleridge had already familiarised himself with Neo-Platonism, and had translated the Hymns of Synesius into English anacreontics. During his first association with Wordsworth the two young men studied Spinoza together, and talked over his philosophy in the course of their walks. The monism of Spinoza's Ethics seemed to find a scientific basis in

the associationism based on Locke's philosophy, to which Coleridge first gave the physiological interpretation of Hartley, and afterwards the spiritualistic interpretation of Berkeley. A nine months' residence in Germany, followed by a close study of Kant in his English home (1801–4), still further strengthened the spiritualistic convictions to which he remained true for the rest of his life. He now abandoned his youthful necessarianism as being inconsistent with the consciousness of moral obligation, and persuaded Wordsworth to abandon it also. But, like Wordsworth, he still remained a pantheist. Indeed, the most distinct declaration of impersonal theism to be found in all Coleridge's writings belongs to this period. A letter of his to the Rev. J. P. Estlin contains the following significant confidences :—

'I am sometimes jealous that some of the Unitarians make too much an idol of their *one* God. Even the worship of one God becomes Idolatry in my convictions when instead of the Eternal and Omnipotent, in whom we live and move and *have* our Being, we set up a distinct Jehovah tricked out in the *anthropomorphic* attributes of time and successive thought, and think of him as a *Person* from whom we *had* our Being. The tendency to Idolatry seems to me to lie at the root of all our human vices—it is our original sin. When we dismiss three Persons in the Deity only by subtracting *two*, we talk more intelligibly, but, I fear, do not feel more religiously—for God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit.'[1]

That this was no casual speculation, tentatively thrown out, but a deep and settled conviction, is proved by the fact that it was communicated as such to at least one of his friends besides Estlin. William Godwin tells a correspondent that he first met Coleridge in 1794, and that six years later their 'acquaintance had ripened into a high degree of affectionate intimacy.'[2] Holcroft had made him an atheist; Coleridge's conversation caused him to regard that name with less complacency, and led him into a new train of thinking. He retained 'the utmost repugnance for the idea of an intelligent Creator and Governor of the universe,' suggesting as it did the most irrational anthropomorphism. (Anthropomorphism, be it remembered, is the very

[1] 'Letters,' p. 415 (1802).

[2] Kegan Paul, 'William Godwin and his Friends,' Vol. I., p. 119.

word used by Coleridge in the same connexion.) But he has come to think that there is a sort of theism independent of that idea. He has adopted a religion consisting in 'a reverent and soothing contemplation of all that is beautiful, grand, and mysterious in the system of the universe, and with (*sic*) a certain conscious intercourse and correspondence with the principles of these attributes.'[1] If this was a vague it was at least a permanent faith, for twenty years later we find Godwin describing himself as an adorer of nature, never weary of admiring and reverencing the majestic structure in which we live; his soul full to bursting with its incomprehensible mystery; and this he still calls religion. It will be remembered how great a part the same cosmic emotion plays in 'Tintern Abbey,' the 'Recluse,' and the 'Excursion;' how at the very same time it was being proclaimed to educated Germany by Schleiermacher as the triumphant refutation of atheism; and how both in England and Germany it was associated with the enthusiastic revival of Spinozism.

Godwin had his faults; but intellectual confusion was not one of them. He did not on the strength of his conversion to pantheism call himself a Christian. Coleridge held fast to the name, and even went on to justify it by an unimpeachable profession of orthodoxy. The year after his return to England from a Mediterranean tour (1807) he tells Cottle that he has renounced all his Socinian sentiments, and declares his deepest conviction of the truth of Revelation; of the Fall of man; of the Divinity of Christ; and of redemption alone through his blood.

It was not exactly necessary to inform the excellent bookseller in what sense these edifying phrases were to be understood; nor indeed could their esoteric meaning have easily been made intelligible to the philistine apprehension. But with another friend, Crabb Robinson, who had studied German philosophy at the fountain head, Coleridge opened himself more freely. 'Jesus Christ,' he said, 'was a Platonic philosopher. And when Christ spoke of his identity with the Father, he spoke in a pantheistic or Spinozistic sense, according to which he could truly say that his transcendental sense[2] was one

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 357–8.

[2] *Sic*; perhaps Coleridge said *self*. But the meaning is evident.

with God, while his empirical sense retained its finite nature.' Coleridge added that 'accepting Christianity as he did as in its spirit in conformity with his own philosophy, he was content for the sake of its divine truths to receive as articles of faith or perhaps I (Crabb Robinson) ought to say, to leave undisputed the miracles of the New Testament taken in their literal sense.' [1]

In the course of the same conversation Coleridge warmly praised Schiller's essay 'Ueber die Sendung Moses.' The circumstance deserves notice; for in the piece referred to Schiller not only rejects by implication the idea of a supernatural revelation, such as that related in Exodus, but he also interprets Mosaism as a popular version of the esoteric pantheism taught by the Egyptian priests to their most advanced disciples, of whom he supposes the Hebrew lawgiver to have been one.

A year later (December, 1811) Coleridge is mentioned as having just declared his adhesion to the principles of Bull and Waterland in a letter to the editor of the 'Eclectic Review.' So well known were his real views at the time that some people thought him 'hardly sincere.' Robinson does not wish to speak so harshly, but is 'altogether unable to reconcile his metaphysical and empirico-religious opinions;' believes, however, that he is only inconsistent. Had the diarist remained a few years longer in Germany and attended Schelling's Lectures on University Studies, he would have seen how the pantheistic philosophy of the sister-nation was tending in a much more outspoken fashion to make its peace with Protestant theology.

Schelling's influence, although unacknowledged, was evidently at work in Coleridge's mind, suggesting a new form of pantheism compatible with the admission of freewill. We have a scenic, almost histrionic, presentation of the change in Crabb Robinson's pages. Coleridge opens the 'Ethica,' kisses Spinoza's portrait on the face, exclaiming, 'this book is a gospel to me!' but adds, in less than a minute, 'his philosophy is nevertheless false;' epigrammatically explaining that were the fundamental truth of philosophy expressible in the form 'it is,' Spinoza would be right; whereas we begin (or ought to begin) with 'I am.' [2]

[1] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. I., pp. 307–9.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 399.

This new departure looks like a reversion to the standpoint of Descartes: in reality it is an advance to the standpoint of Fichte and Schelling, to their synthesis of Spinozism with the subjectivity of Kant, or rather of Kant's whole century, concisely expressed by Hegel when he said that substance and subject are one. Aristotle, whom Hegel quotes in this connexion, had struck out very much the same line of speculation when he set up an eternally self-thinking thought as the supreme type of existence. But Aristotle's Absolute had personality without will; the Absolute of German neo-pantheism has, or rather *is*, will without personality; for originally it is without self-consciousness. Indeed, we have hardly a right to use such words as 'is' and 'being' in connexion with it at all.

Coleridge had been prepared by his early studies in neo-Platonism for this supreme effort of abstraction, which is also the supreme consummation of mystical ecstasy. For the One of Plotinus, whence all things proceed and whither they would fain return, is above and before all being, yet has infinite power to produce being—an idea wrought out in scholastic detail and ostensibly reconciled with Christian orthodoxy by John Scotus Erigena, whom Coleridge had also studied with enthusiasm.

This task of reconciliation was greatly facilitated by the circumstance that neo-Platonism also has its Trinity, widely different indeed from the Catholic Trinity, but near enough to it for the very accommodating standards of theosophy, whether applied in the ninth century or in the nineteenth. From the One proceeds absolute Reason, or Existence in the fullest sense, having for the content of its self-reflexion the Platonic Ideas. Here Being, properly so called, first appears; for the One, as already observed, transcends Being. And from Reason, in the third place, proceeds the universal Life, the Soul of the World. After that follows the sensible material universe, descending through successive gradations until it melts into the formlessness of matter as such, which falls below Being as much as the One rises above it.

It will be observed that although the successive stages of the neo-Platonic Trinity are coeternal, the whole evolution being independent of time, they are not coequal, the second being in manifest subordination to, and of lower dignity than the first, while the third is similarly related to the second.

Neither are they persons, notwithstanding a sort of analogon to self-consciousness attributed to the absolute Reason; nor, finally, do they constitute a unity, apart from that fundamental unity involved in the supremacy of the One.

I should apologise for what looks like a digression, were it not absolutely necessary to recall these forgotten things, if we would make head or tail of Coleridge and his religion. It is important to remember what different meanings the same words may bear, when we are told that in this last conversation the poet reiterated his acceptance of all the doctrines of Christianity, 'even the Trinity.' He who comes across such declarations from lips which have kissed the lips of Spinoza, must be always asking himself how much they signify, and whose Trinity we are to understand as making the extreme limit of such a summary creed. Nor should any of the violent attacks on pantheism scattered up and down Coleridge's writings be accepted as disclaimers of that philosophy on his own account, until it has been made clear to what particular pantheism he is referring.

It may be suggested by those who set store on the poet's authority as a support for Catholic orthodoxy, that his views underwent a further development after the conversation with Crabb Robinson quoted above, and that with advancing years he came to accept Christianity in a more literal sense. Passages from his later works might certainly be adduced in support of this view, which also seems to be confirmed by a remark of Robinson's, made in 1825, to the effect that Coleridge's doctrines 'are assuming an orthodox air.' Unfortunately, however, this theory requires us to believe that he became more sincere as well as more religious in his old age; that is to say, at the very time when the temptations to outward conformity with the established religion were strongest, while the ability to resist them had been reduced to the lowest point by prolonged indulgence in opium. For the Notes on Jeremy Taylor, mostly written in 1810 for the use of Charles Lamb, are stamped throughout with the same appearance of dogmatic orthodoxy that the commentator chose to exhibit during the whole of his later career when addressing himself to uninitiated auditors. Lamb, no doubt, remained unconverted, and probably regarded the marginalia with which his copy of Jeremy Taylor was

enriched as a rather ponderous specimen of that peculiar vein of humour which he supposed to be called forth in his revered friend by the subject of supernatural religion. But to other and less cynical readers they are calculated to convey as edifying an impression as anything in their author's 'Lay Sermons' or his 'Aids to Reflection.'

As a last resource the apologist may, if he likes, throw discredit on Crabb Robinson's testimony. And assuredly reports of this kind neither do nor ought they to carry with them the very highest kind of conviction. Every one who has ever mixed in intellectual society must have noticed how easily wrong impressions are conveyed, even when the interlocutors are perfectly candid, scrupulously accurate, and quick to seize the most subtly discriminated shades of meaning. In this instance, however, we have to do with a diarist who made it the business of his life to note down the conversation of the remarkable men and women with whom he habitually associated; whose reports are consistent with the known character of the person whose opinions he relates; and who, so far as I know, has never been convicted or even accused of any serious inaccuracy.

What is more, Crabb Robinson's account seems to be confirmed by certain indications, pointing in the same direction, to be found scattered through Coleridge's later writings. They are scanty enough; and perhaps none of them standing alone would be quite cogent. But, bearing in mind the writer's habitual reticence and equivocation, there are more such than we had a right to expect; and, taken in conjunction with the evidence already furnished, the cumulative effect is considerable.

Commenting on Waterland, who, without any particular reference to the use of the word 'persona' in the Latin form of the Athanasian Creed, talks about 'the Person of the Father,' Coleridge exclaims, 'O most unhappy mistranslation of hypostasis by Person! The Word is properly the only Person.'[1] In this connexion, as elsewhere, he insists that Christ is identical with Jehovah. The Son and the Spirit, or the Word and the Wisdom, were alone worshipped because alone revealed under the Law.[2] I say nothing about the orthodoxy of this

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 182. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

rather startling assertion, which must be left for professional theologians to deal with. But I must confess that I fail to understand how the Son, being himself a revelation of the Father, can be revealed without revealing the Father at the same time. Be this as it may, the great enemy of Socinianism seems to have landed us in a new sort of uni-personal theism, with the Jewish Jehovah incarnate as Jesus left as the sole personal God. But even this personality first begins with the earthly life of Jesus, and probably comes to an end with it also. For another passage speaks about 'the incarnation of the creative Logos and his becoming a personal agent.'[1] We had learned that the Word was the only Person in the Trinity. We now learn that it only becomes personal by incarnation in the manhood of Jesus Christ. And this idea may perhaps be taken as throwing light on an obscure passage in the Essay on Church and State, where reason in its highest sense is defined as 'the Supreme Being contemplated objectively, and in abstraction from the (*sic*) personality.'[2] I think the definite article is purposely introduced so as to create an ambiguity, and to leave us in doubt whether the personality of God or of man is meant.

Later still, writing to his most trusted and devoted disciple, J. H. Green, Coleridge emphasises 'the great truth that the perfect reality is predicable only where there is no potential being, and that this alone is absolute reality . . . and the still more fundamental truth that the *ground of all* reality, the objective no less than the subjective, is the Absolute Subject.'[3] Apparently this absolute subject, elsewhere called Ipseity, is, in Christian language, the Father; while absolute reality, or reason, is the Son, and their union the Spirit; God in the most universal sense being the absolute Will or Identity. This last idea is borrowed from Schelling, doubtless under the persuasion that it was merely another name for the One of Plotinus.

Finally, in 1832, Coleridge published an extract from a poem called 'Youth and Age,' which, as first printed in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' ended with the following lines:—

> 'O! might Life cease and Selfless Mind
> Whose total *Being* is *Act*, alone remain behind!'

[1] 'Omniana,' p. 428.

[2] P. 265 (1827).

[3] 'Letters,' p. 755.

This mind, whose being is pure act, was originally the Nous or self-thinking thought of Aristotle, with whom, as with the Schoolmen, it was personal. But with Plotinus it had ceased to be personal, being, in fact, what a mathematician would call the *locus* of the Platonic Ideas; or, as Coleridge puts it, the Supreme Spirit in which all these substantially are and are one.[1] Considered as a unity this reason is the Father, considered as a multiplicity it is the Son, considered as the synthesis of both it is the Spirit. And now, as a finishing touch, we learn that it is 'Selfless.' The conviction expressed thirty years before, and really never let drop in the interim, asserts itself decisively for the last time. But the dangerous admission was quickly withdrawn, and the lines quoted will be vainly sought for in the verses as subsequently republished with Coleridge's other poems.[2] The omission does but draw attention to their profound significance, for his philosophy, his religion, and his total view of life.

We may now pass with sufficient equanimity to a consideration of the passages where Coleridge repudiates and denounces pantheism with an apparent sincerity which might deceive the very elect. 'There is, there can be,' he declares, 'no medium between the Catholic Faith of Trinal Unity and Atheism disguised in the self-contradictory term Pantheism—for everything God and no God are identical positions.'[3] And from a purely intellectualist point of view the choice between these alternatives would not be doubtful. 'The inevitable result of all consequent reasoning in which the intellect refuses to acknowledge a higher or deeper ground than it can itself supply . . . is, and, from Zeno the Eleatic to Spinoza, and from Spinoza to the Schellings, Okens, and their adherents of the present day, ever has been, pantheism under one or other of its modes, the least repulsive of which differs from the rest, not in its consequences, which are one and the same in all, and in all alike are practically atheistic, but only as it may express the striving of the philosopher himself to hide these consequences from his own mind. . . . All speculative disquisitions must begin with

[1] 'Church and State,' pp. 133–4.
[2] They will be found in Macmillan's edition of the Poems.
[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 181.

postulates which the conscience alone can at once authorize and substantiate: and from whichever point the reason may start, from the things which are seen to the one invisible, or from the idea of the absolute one to the things that are seen, it will find a chasm which the moral being only, which the spirit and religion of man alone can fill up. . . . This principle [is], to comprise all in one word, the method of the will.'[1]

Apparently the chasm was less easy to fill than Coleridge at first imagined; for, seven years later, we find him telling Crabb Robinson that 'atheism (*i.e.* pantheism) seeks only for an infinite cause of all things; the spurious divine is content with mere personality and personal will, which is the death of all reason. The philosophic theologian unites both.' 'How this was to be done,' adds Robinson, 'he did not say.'[2]

Meanwhile, the conviction of sin, as we have seen, had for him, more than for most philosophic theologians, an awfully pressing personal reality; and he kept preaching it as the basis of all religion with an energy worthy of an Evangelical divine, spurious or genuine. I have already quoted some strong expressions from an early letter to his brother George on the subject. His chief theological work, the 'Aids to Reflection,' reasserts the same position still more unequivocally. 'Man was and is a fallen creature, not by accident of bodily constitution, or any other cause which human wisdom in a course of ages might be supposed capable of removing, but as diseased in his will, in that will which is the true and only synonym of the word I or the intelligent self.'[3]

This is one of the three ultimate facts with which religious philosophy starts: the other two are the reality of the law of conscience, and the existence of a responsible will.[4] Then comes the redemption of sinners by the Incarnate Word as the substance of the Christian dispensation.[5] Original sin and redemption are indeed not peculiarly Christian doctrines, but are fundamental articles of every known religion professing to have been revealed.[6] And as there is no logical halting-place

[1] 'The Friend,' Vol. III., pp. 204–5. Coleridge may or may not have known that Schelling called Will (Wollen) 'the essential foundation and basis of all existence' (Werke, erste Abtheilung, Vol. VII., p. 385).

[2] 'Diary,' Vol. II., p. 273. [3] Pp. 103–4. [4] *Ibid.*

[5] 'Table Talk,' p. 203. [6] 'Friend,' Vol. III., p. 78.

between Trinitarianism and a pantheism which is equivalent to atheism, so there is none between this theory of moral evil and what we should now call agnosticism. 'All hangs together. . . . Deny Original Sin and you will soon deny freewill, then virtue and vice, and God becomes Abracadabra, a sound and nothing else.'[1]

He who finds a Christian doctrine in 'every known religion professing to have been revealed' will be apt to strip the doctrine of its specifically Christian meaning and force, volatilising it into theosophic vapour. And this is precisely what Coleridge did with Original Sin. Accepting the corruption of human nature as a fact, he rejects the received interpretation of the fact with uncompromising severity. When he wrote, all branches of Western Christendom, except the Unitarians, to whom he denies the name of Christians, agreed in teaching that the first man and woman had fallen from the state of innocence, in which they were created, by eating the fruit of a forbidden tree; and that through this act their posterity were born in a state of sin deserving eternal damnation.

Such teaching Coleridge denounces as 'the monstrous fiction of hereditary sin—guilt inherited.'[2] To believe it is to make God act 'in the spirit of the cruellest laws of jealous governments towards their enemies upon the principle of treason in the blood.'[3] But for certain passages in St. Paul most of us would believe that Adam was a myth;[4]—as no doubt Coleridge really himself believed Adam and the whole story of the Fall to be. For himself he does not pretend to explain Original Sin. He declares it to be an unaccountable fact—a mystery rooted in the wider mystery of freewill (as if it were not the precise negation of that personal responsibility for which it is assumed as the foundation), or, to speak more generally, in the mystery of individual existence.[5] He censures Jeremy Taylor for assuming that 'the consequences of Original Sin were superinduced on a previously existing nature in no essential

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 279.

[2] 'Aids,' p. 243.

[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 247.

[4] *Ibid.* In one of his magnificent metaphors Coleridge observes that the divines of the Reformation have thrown the darkness of storms on an awful fact of human nature which in itself had only the darkness of negations.

[5] P. 259.

respect differing from our present nature—the animal nature in man.' 'But,' he adds—and the words are highly significant —'this very nature as the antagonist of the spirit or supernatural principle in man, is in fact the Original Sin,' which 'must originate in a self-determination of a will.'[1] Surely this is the rankest Manichaeism, the heresy that matter, or what Coleridge calls the animal nature, as the principle of individuation is intrinsically evil. And it is evil because it separates us from the absolute One, which is the sole good. What was to have saved us from pantheism brings us round to pantheism once more.

Elsewhere, but in precisely the same sense, he refers to the doctrine of fallen spirits as 'the mythological form of a profound idea indispensable if we would render the existence of a world of finites compatible with the assumption of a supermundane God, not one with the world.' It is 'the condition under which alone the reason can retain the doctrine of an infinite and absolute Being, and yet keep clear of pantheism as exhibited by Benedict Spinoza.'[2] But not, we must add, from pantheism as exhibited by Plotinus and Schelling.

The darkness thickens when we pass from the mystery of sin to the still more mysterious mechanism provided for its removal by the Christian dispensation, to the doctrine of the Atonement. As ordinarily interpreted in Coleridge's time by divines of all persuasions in Western Christendom—the Unitarians, as before, being excepted—this doctrine meant that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God himself, by his sufferings and death on the Cross, bore the punishment due to the sins of the whole human race, and in this way satisfied the righteous vengeance of the Father, thus harmonising the claims of justice with the pleadings of mercy, and reconciling God with man. On one point only was there a difference of opinion among theologians. According to some God's wrath was appeased by the satisfaction of knowing what agonies his Son had endured. According to others no such gratification was experienced by the Father; and we must look on the Passion as a theatrical performance solemnly arranged with the object of impressing on men and angels the great truth that sin cannot be forgiven

[1] P. 264.

[2] 'Miscellanies,' p. 170.

without the payment—in this case, as it happened, by an innocent party—of an equivalent penalty. All were also agreed in holding that the salvation of each particular sinner depended on his acceptance of the transfer so arranged, with this difference, that while the Evangelicals made the efficacy of the appropriation depend on a personal act of faith in the Saviour, the Roman Catholics and high Anglicans identified it rather with incorporation in the Church of Christ and submission to her prescriptions.

Coleridge could no more believe in such a scheme of salvation than he could believe in hereditary guilt. Like Sozzini, he felt his reason and conscience outraged by such a confusion between persons and things. The Unitarians protested against it, and so he became a Unitarian. On returning to the Church, he brought their arguments with him, and gave them a classical expression in his 'Aids to Reflection.' 'If you attach any meaning to the word justice,' he contends, 'as applied to God, it must be the same to which you refer when you affirm or deny it of any other personal agent—save only that in its attribution to God you speak of it as unmixed and perfect. For if not, what do you mean? And why do you call it by the same name?' He then goes on to show that while one man may discharge another man from the obligation of a money debt by paying it himself, he cannot expiate another's guilt by performing a duty which the other has neglected. It is, however, conceivable that the guilty party may be induced to repent and reform by seeing what the other has done. Still, the redemption of man by Christ's sufferings and death remains a transcendental mystery.[1]

The mystery, as I have observed on a former occasion, exists only for a mind like Coleridge's, imbued with Hellenic principles of reason and justice. To the more primitive conscience, as, for instance, to many so-called educated women among ourselves, the substitution of one person's sufferings for another's in expiation of an offence has nothing revolting or paradoxical about it. What is more, from the high mystical point of view, shared to a certain extent by Coleridge himself, such vicarious satisfaction also becomes intelligible, apparently constituting a kind of sacramental union with the All-One.

[1] 'Aids,' pp. 273–5.

And perhaps this was what he really thought about the Atonement, but feared to say openly, lest it might seem to involve an acknowledgment of the pantheism he affected to abjure.

At any rate, the admission of insoluble mysteries in religion, whether sincere or affected, is inconsistent with what Coleridge elsewhere affirms. 'The Christian to whom after a long profession of Christianity the mysteries remain as much mysteries as before is in the same state as a schoolboy with regard to his arithmetic, to whom the facit [1] at the end of the examples in his ciphering book is the whole ground for his assuming that such and such figures amount to so and so.' [2] The aphorism is translated without acknowledgment from Lessing's 'Education of the Human Race;' and Coleridge's sole example of how a mystery can be rationally explained is derived, equally without acknowledgment, from the same source. 'An intelligent Creator,' he argues, 'must have had coeternally an adequate idea of himself in and through which he created all things both in heaven and earth.' [3] Never has a more unwarrantable assumption passed current as self-evident truth. Nor has Lessing's assertion even the relative value of elucidating a historical process of thought. His interpretation of the Logos throws no light on what it meant for early Christianity. This can only be ascertained by a careful study of Philo Judaeus, who knows nothing of the Logos as a necessity of the divine self-consciousness, but has much to say about it as an intermediary between God and the world.

Lessing, however, as a pre-Kantian thinker, and not very profound at that, could give Coleridge but scanty assistance in the construction of a religious philosophy. From the beginning of the century on, Kant and Schelling were his chief guides in metaphysics, grudging as were his acknowledgments of their assistance. Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason' completed the work begun, even before his visit to Germany, by Berkeley's 'Principles of Human Knowledge,' in liberating him from the bondage of Hartley's and Priestley's materialism. It gave him

[1] I believe this word occurs nowhere else in the English language. It is common in German.

[2] 'Omniana,' pp. 427–8.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

the vital distinction between noumena and phenomena, the spiritual world of reality and the apparent world of sense. In close conjunction with this it gave him also the distinction, which figured so largely in his Highgate conversations, between the objective and the subjective. And finally it gave him the distinction, now more closely associated than any other formula with his own teaching, the famous distinction between the Reason and the Understanding.

One of Coleridge's younger hearers, with a great appetite for short telling phrases, seized on this last distinction, immortalised it in a literary masterpiece, and gave it a world-wide notoriety. 'Coleridge,' says Carlyle in bitter disillusioned irony, 'Coleridge knew the sublime secret of believing by the "reason" what the "understanding" had been obliged to fling out as incredible.'[1] But the author of 'Sartor Resartus,' while intellectually the most powerful of the young men who gathered round the sage in those last years at Highgate, had perhaps the least aptitude of them all for philosophy, for pure abstract thinking. His passionate hold on concrete facts, his passionate impatience for definite practical results, disqualified him as much for that as they qualified him for writing picturesquely moralising history. In this instance, at any rate, he falsifies both the letter and the spirit of the master's teaching. Coleridge tells us that 'there can be no contrariety between revelation and the understanding; they do not address themselves to the same order of facts.'[2] And again: 'I would raise up my understanding to my reason and find my religion in the forms resulting from their convergence.'[3] Once more: 'The understanding says that this *is* or ought to be so, the Reason says it *must* be so.'[4] On the other side I can only find a single passage. 'Faith is but an act of the will assenting to the reason on its own evidence without, or even against the understanding.'[5] And this, as we shall see, relates rather to practice than to belief. For the rest, Coleridge, when he criticises particular beliefs, uses much the same methods as the free-thinkers of the preceding age.

Still, it is not intended for a moment to deny that Coleridge

[1] 'Life of Sterling,' p. 53.
[2] 'Aids,' pp. 156–7.
[3] 'Church and State,' p. 183.
[4] 'Table Talk,' p. 14.
[5] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 77.

did attach enormous importance to the existence of these two faculties, and to the supposed antithesis between their respective functions. And our examination of his attitude towards religion and rationalism demands an attempt more searching than has as yet been made to elucidate this part of his philosophy. The enquiry is a difficult one, and necessitates a brief historical sketch of the distinction in question.

Plato, in his 'Republic,' distinguishes between two mental faculties, which he calls respectively Nous and Dianoia, words which it is customary to translate by Reason and Understanding. By the latter we apprehend the truths of mathematical and physical science; by the former the ultimate and absolute realities on which these depend. The inferiority of merely scientific truths is due to two causes: they involve a variety of unproved assumptions; and their objects are, so to speak, adulterated with an admixture of unreality in the shape of a material or sensible embodiment. In modern parlance, the geometrician assumes space; the physicist assumes mass and motion; the astronomer assumes a number of bodies of definite size moving through space, and so forth. But none of them has shown that these things *must* be; they are, as we say, assumed on the precarious evidence of the senses. A perfect philosopher, a true noetic, would assume nothing, and would demonstrate *a priori* the necessity of all that is. Plato himself did not attempt the task, but pointed to it as an ideal goal for his successors to attain.

Aristotle adopted Plato's distinction, but presented it under a simplified form, and stripped of its transcendent implications. According to his view, reason apprehends the simple concepts of which judgments are made up; understanding puts the terms together, and frames propositions which may be either true or false, whereas reason asserts nothing but the presence of a concept to the mind as its object, like the presentation of an image to the eye, a fact of itself admitting no mistake. Thus reason supplies the first principles of demonstrative science, higher than which we cannot ascend, and which cannot be conceived as being other than they are. When consequences are deduced with logical accuracy from such first principles, so as to form a chain of demonstrative reasoning, Aristotle calls

both the result of the process, as science, and the faculty by which it is accomplished, Epistêmê. On the model of this word both the German word Verstand and its English equivalent, understanding, seem to have been formed. Its operation is sometimes distinguished from that of Nous as discursive from intuitive reasoning. Thus St. Augustine, as quoted by Sir William Hamilton, 'seems to view Reason as the faculty of intuitive truths, and as opposed to Reasoning,' which he defines as 'an effort of thought to pass from certainties to the investigation of what is uncertain.'[1] And, as Hamilton also points out, the distinction became long ago so familiar to the French language that Molière introduces it into his 'Femmes Savantes.'

So the subject remained until Kant gave it a new interest and a new interpretation by his criticism of Pure Reason, some account of which has been offered in a former chapter. In his system Reason retains her old prerogative of introducing us to things in themselves, to the unconditioned and transcendent objects which sense and understanding cannot reach. But her position is purely honorary and titular. There is no guarantee for the real existence of the things about which Reason professes to inform us. What we do know is revealed by understanding working in combination with sense. For neither of these two would be of any use without the other. Understanding (Verstand) supplies the Categories or ways of putting together the loose materials of consciousness, by which alone the most ordinary experience and the most elaborate scientific constructions are made possible. But these categories have no meaning or value except as applied to objects presented under the forms of space and time. Empty them of that content and their action becomes the idle working of machinery *in vacuo*. To put the same conclusion a little differently, all knowledge is limited to experience, and experience is limited to phenomena. But what appears to us appears under the forms of space and time; and Kant proves, or attempts to prove, that space and time have no existence apart from our perceptions: they are simply our ways of arranging the things of sense, at once bringing them together and holding them apart. Had previous philosophers been aware of this very simple fact, they would not have puzzled themselves over insoluble metaphysical

[1] 'The Works of Thomas Reid,' p. 768.

problems. To ask whether the world is finite or infinite, or whether it has or has not been created in time, is to assume that existence forms a sum-total, and that, apart from our consciousness, it may be conceived as extended and enduring. Starting on this false assumption, it is no wonder that we soon become involved in contradictions. One chain of reasoning proves that the world is finite, another that it is infinite; a third that it has been created, a fourth that it has existed from all eternity. All are equally cogent, and none has any real value whatever. And the proofs offered by theologians of the soul's immortality, as also of the existence of God, are equally illusory. These three Ideas of the world, the soul, and God, or the Supreme Being, are not objects of experience but products of the Reason. Still, while adding nothing to our knowledge, they have their value in summing up and systematising it. And criticism, after all, leaves the religious question open. If God and immortality cannot be proved, neither can they be disproved. To accomplish either feat, we should get outside ourselves.

I need not now repeat how Kant found, or fancied he found, a way out of this theoretical scepticism by means of his system of practical postulates—in other words, by a peculiarly puzzle-headed mixture of intellectual and ethical ophelism; for Coleridge never seems to have attached much importance to this part of his philosophy. Nor need we recur to Fichte, whom he treats with unmerited, perhaps ignorant, contempt. Passing at once to Schelling, we find that to this most versatile and poetic of German thinkers the obligations of the English poet were at once the greatest and the most grudgingly acknowledged—if, indeed, they were acknowledged at all. We have seen how Kant's agnosticism followed as a necessary consequence from his opposition of the subject to the object in knowledge. Schelling overcame this antithesis by declaring—one may almost say by decreeing—their identity. Within the sphere of consciousness the process is accomplished, or rather accomplishes itself, with engaging simplicity. For when the self knows itself, the knower and the known are evidently one and the same. Here the subject is object to itself. And we know our fellow-men as other selves by the analogy of our own self. The difficulty begins with the inanimate world. We are

apt to think of this as an object for us without consciousness, without subjectivity of its own. Schelling insists that it has such a consciousness, that there is a soul of nature, that the whole process of cosmic evolution is one of self-realisation, ascending from the simplest elements of space to the highest creations of the human mind. This ascent is accomplished through a series of triads with subject, object, and the identity of both as their constant terms.

Coleridge wrote a very creditable exercise in this sort of card-house building, published several years after his death under the title of the 'Theory of Life.' It possesses some historical interest as having apparently suggested to Herbert Spencer his theory of organic evolution as a process of increasing individuation and diminishing reproductiveness, the two varying inversely as one another. In this instance Coleridge seems to have really improved on his original, combining and making more definite the rather vague and incoherent aperçus which Schelling himself had borrowed to a great extent from the naturalist Kielmeyer.

But Schelling's pseudo-scientific cobwebs counted for little in the mind of his English follower as compared with his reinterpretation of reason, or rather his return to the old Platonic interpretation of it as the one absolute reality. When subject and object are identified, the chasm between noumena and phenomena is filled up, and Ideas, so far from counting as subjective illusions, acquire paramount importance as revelations of things in themselves. Being products of Reason, they represent, or rather *are* themselves the highest realities. Thought creates its own objects; for things are in the deepest sense thoughts. They exist because they have the power to think themselves out.

Coleridge does not seem to have risen to this speculative height until after many years of study; for in 1817 we still find him distinguishing between reason and understanding in an Aristotelian rather than in a Platonic sense, while the Kantian sense is quite ignored. According to his exposition in the 'Friend,' reason gives us clear conceptions, it may be of spatial relations, such as a point, a straight line, or an enclosed figure; or it may be of moral ideals, such as justice and

holiness.[1] Reasoning in the secondary sense consists in perceiving whether the conceptions so furnished do or do not contradict one another; as when we judge that two straight lines cannot enclose a space.[2] Understanding is apparently synonymous with reasoning or inference, whether applied to the notices furnished by the outer sense, the phenomena of perception, or to the invisible realities revealed to that organ of inward sense which we call reason. But while the comparison of concepts, from whatever source they may be derived, properly belongs to the understanding, the highest regulative principle of thought belongs to the pure reason, and to that alone. This principle is the famous Law of Contradiction, the axiom that contradictory predicates cannot coexist in the same subject.[3] So far we remain well within the sphere of Aristotle's logic.

When Coleridge offered these explanations his leading interest seems to have been practical rather than speculative. His object was not to exhibit the constitution of things in themselves, but to establish the reasonableness of moral conduct; reason being understood, in the highest sense of the term, as the vision of spiritual realities, of what they involve, and of what they exclude. It had been held unreasonable for a man to pursue anything but his own advantage, to sacrifice himself to others, or to duty in the abstract, except for the purpose of gaining some compensatory pleasure either in this world or in the next. Virtue was identified with prudence. But to Coleridge nothing seemed more irrational than such logic, which confounds disinterestedness with self-interest, and subordinates the general to the particular instead of the particular to the general. It cannot be right for me to do or to leave undone what I should think it not right for another person placed in the same circumstances to do or to omit. Here moral science has the same certainty as geometry, and draws it from the same source, from pure reason. Not that reason is a motive to action. Its function is to illuminate conscience, or the sense of moral responsibility, by which alone the moral will can be set in motion.[4]

At this stage of his speculative evolution Coleridge lays

[1] 'Friend,' Vol I., p. 233.
[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 210–11.
[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 208–9.
[4] *Ibid.*

down a principle from which he never afterwards swerved. Reason is not only the vision of spiritual realities, but is also those realities themselves. 'God, the soul, etc., are the objects of reason, but they are also themselves reason.'[1] It would, therefore, seem justifiable to say that reason is God. An attempt to evade the obvious consequence by calling him the Supreme Reason[2] would be futile, for there can be only one reason. As a knowledge of the whole, and as identical with its object, it must *be* the whole. Nor would the subterfuge of treating it as something introduced into the soul from without and irradiating it with supernatural light prove any more successful. For reason is also identified with conscious self-knowledge; so that by a not very extended series of equations God works out as the consciousness of ourselves. In short, he is only personal when we supply the personality.[3]

Coleridge very probably saw that his Graeco-German philosophy was once more leading him straight back into the pantheism which at one time he unquestionably accepted, but the imputation of which in his later years—the years of political reaction—he so carefully avoided. One sees the attempt at a backward step in his later analysis of the two great intellectual functions, reason and understanding. Henceforth their provinces are much more rigidly separated than in the above-quoted essay. According to the view taken there, understanding could combine into judgments the spiritual elements supplied by reason no less than the images of ordinary sense; but at a later period it is denied that power. Understanding, we are told, 'concerns itself exclusively with the quantities, qualities, and relations of particulars in time and space.' It is 'the science of phaenomena and of their subsumption under distinct kinds and sorts.'[4] Its sphere, in short, is the sphere of conceptual logic.[5]

These definitions show that the guidance of Aristotle has been exchanged for the guidance of Kant. But Kant would have been alarmed to hear that 'all logic and all logical

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 124.
[2] 'Church and State,' p. 264.
[3] *Ibid.*; Southey's 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 91, Coleridge's note.
[4] 'Church and State,' p. 258.
[5] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 217.

conclusions are inherently unreal and inconsequent.'[1] Such a phrase reminds one of that 'supercilious tone in philosophy,' whose beginnings in his own lifetime the old master had regretfully occasion to observe. However, Coleridge does well to put us on our guard against logic, for reason—reason in the true sense, of course—seems to be a singularly illogical faculty, and none the worse on that account. As expounded in the 'Friend,' one of its functions was to keep contradictory conceptions apart. We now learn that it gives us intuitions which can only be expressed by contradictory conceptions.[2]

We have, perhaps, an example of this remarkable legerdemain in the alleged power which reason gives us as self-consciousness 'of contemplating the self as an IDEA loosened from the sensation of ONE'S own self as the I am'—James, John, etc.[3] And so when the noumenal is identified with the subjective as the only true reality, we must be on our guard against confounding this with mere Personal Idealism, that is, with the doctrine that reality consists in an aggregate of more or less conscious minds. That is what the inconclusive logic of the understanding might infer; but to the higher reason this subject, while remaining the foundation of all consciousness, is yet divorced from consciousness and identified with the object.[4]

Thus we begin to see what Coleridge means by the pregnancy of 'the doctrine of opposite correlatives as applied to Deity, but only as manifested in man, not to the Godhead absolutely.'[5] In man the universal reason implied by self-consciousness is correlated with the opposite consciousness of an objective world, from which he distinguishes himself as a finite being: in God as the Absolute there is no such opposition.

This pantheistic interpretation of reason in the Coleridgean sense is abundantly verified by the definitions scattered through

[1] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 259. Coleridge may have derived this idea from Hegel. There is a copy of the 'Wissenschaft der Logik' (1812) in the British Museum, with annotations in his handwriting. They only cover the first division of Part I. (Quality); and as the leaves after this are often uncut, it seems likely that he read no further. But in what he did read there is quite enough to suggest that Reason is a faculty for combining contradictory conceptions. The notes are unfortunately not dated.

[2] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 330.

[3] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 91.

[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 324.

[5] 'Church and State,' p. 265.

the works of the Highgate period. It is 'the knowledge of the whole considered as one . . . the science of the universal having the ideas of oneness and allness as its primary factors;' and it first manifests itself by the tendency to the comprehension of all as one.[1] 'By reason we know that God is, but God is Himself the Supreme Reason. . . . In its highest sense reason is being, the Supreme Being contemplated objectively and in abstraction from the personality.'[2] Again, we learn that prescience and 'freewill are nothing more than the two contradictory positions by which the human understanding struggles to express successively the idea of eternity—not eternity in the negative sense as the mere absence of succession, much less eternity in the senseless sense of an infinite time; but Eternity—the Eternal, as Deity, as God.'[3]

The human understanding must have felt considerably surprised at being told that it meant something so remote from what the terms involved in its debates about prescience and freewill seem to imply. But the mystery clears away to some extent if we interpret the two contradictory positions as really standing for the order of mechanical causation under the name of prescience, and human personality under the name of freewill. In the new pantheism God, or the Eternal, is the synthesis of both, that is of the soul and the world, or, in transcendental language, the absolute identity of subject and object.

It may be urged that whatever doubtful and dangerous expressions Coleridge was betrayed into by the exigencies or the temptations of pure theory, he became a good theist and a fairly orthodox Christian when subjected to the wholesome restraints and responsibilities of a religious and moral teacher. Thus, when we find him declaring that 'pantheism, in whatever drapery of pious phrases disguised, is (where it forms the whole of a system) atheism, and precludes moral responsibility, and the essential difference of right and wrong';[4]—so frank a confession seems to set the question at rest. Unfortunately here also we must bear in mind the sort of writer with whom we have to deal, a master of the most impalpable distinctions and the subtlest equivocations, a slothful, pusillanimous dreamer, in

[1] 'Church and State,' p. 258.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 265.
[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 330.
[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 263.

whom sincerity, if it ever existed, had been destroyed by the use of laudanum. Of this habitual tampering with the value of words for the purpose of conveying different senses according to the needs of the moment, the very passage just quoted offers a striking exemplification. It goes on to specify the doctrine of positive creation as 'the surest criterion between the idea of God and the notion of a *mens agitans molem*;' being, as such, characteristic of the Hebrew Revelation. Yet elsewhere he tells us that it is inconceivable how anything can be created in time;[1] while, as a kind of link between the two statements, on another occasion still he interprets the account of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis as seeming clearly to say: 'The literal fact you could not comprehend if it were related to you, but you may conceive it as if it had taken place thus and thus.'[2] Conceive it, that is to say, after an inconceivable manner! Was ever before such a hash of contradictions served up as the dictates of oracular wisdom?

Let us now go on to examine how moral responsibility and the essential difference between right and wrong, assumed to be incompatible with pantheism, are rehabilitated in the new orthodoxy of Highgate. We look in vain for any indication of the part played by a personal God in enabling us to realise these all-important conceptions, but, on the contrary, much that points away from ordinary theism. What really comes to the rescue is our mysterious friend Reason. In a passage, of which part has been already quoted, this Proteus appears under the form of self-consciousness, as the power of determining an ultimate end. What the simple act of self-contemplation has to do with ends of any kind, ultimate or otherwise, is by no means obvious at first sight. But on turning our thoughts back to the purely metaphysical side of Coleridge's philosophy, we shall be reminded of the part played by self-consciousness in that connexion. It then appeared as a revelation of unity in diversity, suggesting the idea of an Absolute, embracing all existence, and constituted by God as its impersonal subject. The relation to practice becomes a little clearer in the light of this implication. For the ultimate end referred to is then seen

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 142.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 267.

to be the surrender of our individual wills to that universal Will, which, being the very essence and secret of our unifying personality, is yet concealed and confused by its phenomenal manifestation: nay, more, this individual manifestation is an act of revolt from the All-One.

Nevertheless, this unifying power given in self-consciousness is itself a dangerous snare, and suggests to Coleridge another and more explicit interpretation of the Fall. It will be remembered that understanding works within the limiting forms of space and time. Therefore it conceives infinity as endless extension or duration. And such endlessness cannot, so to speak, be totalised: it can be unified in parts, not unified as a whole, for that would amount to bounding what by definition is boundless. Still, the rational instinct is there, suggesting the unification of such materials as are offered to it by experience. And this instinct, according to Coleridge, formed the original temptation through which man fell.[1] In more philosophical language, the natural man either loses the one in striving after the infinite—that is atheism, with or without polytheism; or he loses the infinite in striving after the one, and sinks into anthropomorphic monotheism.

In a previous chapter of this work I have called attention to the isolating and dispersive character of Spinoza's philosophy, its affinity on the religious side with atheism rather than with pantheism. Coleridge perhaps detected this affinity; and his repudiation of Spinozism, which, from the absolutist point of view, was perfectly logical, must not be confounded with an acceptance of the 'anthropomorphic monotheism' which he equally rejected. On an earlier occasion, when his pretensions to orthodox churchmanship were less developed, he had branded the belief in a personal God, simple or triune, as the worst form of original sin. We now see how the same association of ideas continued to shape the expression of his theology in its final and more guarded stage.

Returning to Coleridge's practical philosophy, we are met by a somewhat more embarrassed and ambiguous oracle. 'The understanding is the faculty of means to such ends as are themselves means to some ulterior end.'[2] 'The reason alone can present ultimate ends. Ultimate ends are called, in relation

[1] 'Church and State,' p. 258. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

to the reason, moral ideas. Such are the ideas of the eternal, the good, the true, the holy, the idea of God as the absoluteness and reality . . . of all these, or as the Supreme Spirit in which all these substantially are, and are one: lastly, the idea of the responsible will itself; of duty, of guilt.'[1]

Five years before, in notes not intended for publication, Coleridge had presented the idea of reason as convertible with the idea of God, and as including the idea of freewill, which surely is identical with that 'responsible will' now left outside the divine choir. But such an exclusion cannot possibly be maintained in face of the reiterated declarations that reason is identified with its own objects and with God as their fundamental unity. We are therefore driven to the rather startling conclusion that moral guilt, as an idea of the reason, is contained in God,—an unexpected confirmation of the reconciling sentence—

> 'O Thou that didst the serpent make
> Our pardon give and pardon take!'[2]

Would the sage have waved aside this proffered exchange as an impertinence of the logical understanding, or tolerated it as an attempt to express the inexpressible and inconceivable by two contradictory positions, or welcomed it as letting in some light on the ultimate mystery of the Atonement? We cannot tell; but we know that the higher mysticism would not shrink from the last solution.

All has now been said that can be said with profit about Coleridge's famous distinction between reason and understanding. A close examination of his meaning does but confirm what other evidence made highly probable, namely, that his pantheism continued through life. We have now to enter on the allied topic of his distinction between belief and faith, between the intellectual assent to propositions and the process by which religious facts are apprehended so as to effect a transformation of the converted soul. It is a distinction which has

[1] 'Church and State,' pp. 133–4.

[2] Mrs. Pearsall-Smith, in her work on 'the Unselfishness of God,' quotes these lines as an inscription on a tombstone. They are, in fact, abridged from a quatrain of Omar Khayyam, composed by Ed. Fitzgerald himself.

survived to the present day, and is found most valuable by theologians who are conscious that their pretensions are incompatible with the logic to which all truths, except those of religion, are amenable. Here also the luminous and sincere thought of Greece will help us to disentangle the interested sophistry of modern apologetics.

In the philosophy of Plotinus we find a symmetrical correspondence between the speculative and the practical sides of his system. The whole universe descends in a series of graduated emanations from the superessential One to the most indefinite forms of material existence. And, conversely, the human soul, when awakened to the consciousness of its divine origin, endeavours, by rising through a methodised series of virtuous exercises, to regain the pristine elevation whence it has descended, and again to become one with the One. Coleridge has not left on record whether he ever touched that ecstatic consummation in his opium-dreams; but his religious ideas, when they become practical, remind us in a fragmentary and disjointed fashion of the neo-Platonic scheme. 'Religion,' he says, 'is the consideration of the individual as it exists and has its being in the universal.'[1] And just as Schleiermacher had interpreted faith in the sense of an emotional surrender of the individual, feeling himself in unison with the whole, so Coleridge interprets it more practically as a submission of the particular will to the universal and absolute Being, the impersonal Reason. 'It is,' he declares, 'the identity of the reason and the will (the proper spiritual part of man) consequent on a divine rekindling';[2] 'a total act of the whole moral being,' whose 'living sensorium is in the heart';[3] or, again, 'an act of the will assenting to the reason on its own evidence, without, or even against, the understanding,'[4]—which must here be taken in a purely practical significance as selfish prudence, the sordid calculation of a Panurge or a Sancho Panza in contrast with the chivalrous disinterestedness of a Pantagruel or a Don Quixote; or, again, as the base cunning of Swift's Yahoos.[5]

We can now understand why Coleridge used to insist so

[1] 'Church and State,' p. 258. [2] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 81.
[3] 'Biographia Literaria,' Vol. I., p. 122.
[4] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 77. [5] 'Miscellanies,' pp. 111, 127, 128.

much on the distinction between belief and faith;[1] and what he meant by declaring that 'religion has no speculative dogmas'; that 'all is practical, all appealing to the will, and therefore all imperative.'[2] And in the light of such aphorisms we know what to make of another and apparently contradictory assertion, dating from 1816, that he considered the belief in God and immortality as a duty arising from his sense of responsibility.[3] For this obligatory belief in immortality must be taken, subject to the rejection of endless time as a senseless absurdity, and subject also to the positive interpretation of the time-form (borrowed from an earlier Kantian treatise), as a phenomenal manifestation of the divine eternity; so that immortality would mean no more than a conscious life in God, given through the identification of reason and will. So when, in words already quoted, he tells us that there can be no contrariety between revelation and the understanding, this surely does not mean that understanding is to pick up again what in Carlyle's energetic language it 'had flung away as incredible.' Rather does it imply the silent elimination of all such incredibilities by their conversion into symbols of a higher truth. And lastly, by insisting that 'the undivided faith of Christ demands man's understanding equally with his feelings,'[4] he is not protesting against free philosophical speculation, but against Evangelical obscurantism.

The tendency to base religious belief on ethical or emotional considerations, which in the first chapter of this work I discussed under the general head of ophelism, has indeed no greater enemy than Coleridge; although his infirmity of purpose has sometimes permitted him to drift in that direction. 'To assign a feeling or a determination of will as a satisfactory reason for embracing or rejecting this or that opinion or belief is,' he admits, 'of ordinary occurrence.' Yet to him it seemed 'little less irrational than to apply the nose to a picture, and to decide on its genuineness by the sense of smell.[5] He notices in passing 'the weakness of the argument (not, alas! peculiar to the sophists of Rome, nor employed in support of Papal infallibility only) that this or that must be because sundry

[1] 'Table Talk,' p. 189.
[2] 'Omniana,' p. 419.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 429.
[4] 'Church and State,' p. 365.
[5] 'Aids to Reflection,' p. 4.

inconveniences would result from the want of it.'[1] And commenting on the advice given by Boehler, the Moravian, to Wesley, when the future evangelist of England confessed his dislike to preaching to others when he had no faith himself, 'Preach faith till you have it, and then because you have it you will preach faith,' he asks, is not this too like, 'tell a lie long enough and often enough and you will end by believing it; and yet,' he adds, with his usual tendency to equivocation, 'and yet much may be said where the moral interest of mankind demands it and reason does not countermand. Or where the Scripture seems openly to assert it.'[2]

He does not explain how the moral interests of mankind can be served by habitual and systematic falsehood; nor how Scripture can have any weight with those who lack faith. But the whole passage is important as indicating (i.) an attitude of conscious insincerity on Coleridge's part where religion is concerned; and (ii.) complete subordination of religion to utility; together with (iii.) a reinterpretation of its doctrines in the light of transcendental idealism.

How or to what extent religion, and more particularly the Christian religion, is instrumental to morality, Coleridge has nowhere explained; nor yet what he means by redemption from sin by the cross of Christ; nor what, after all, was in his opinion the office of Jesus as an individual agent. Some hint may perhaps be found in his rather startling assertion that God the Father was first revealed by Jesus. The Father, as we know, is the superessential Good, the mystic One of Plotinus. What the incarnate Word then revealed was the substantial unity of things, the love which turns duty into delight. And we may suppose that this unity was revealed in the life no less than in the teaching of Jesus, in the absolute subordination of his individual will to the will of the Father, that is, of the supreme good, terminating with the surrender of his personal existence to the fountain-head whence it came. But Christ, having died to outward sense, returns to life in his Church, of which we become members through faith, gaining from it the consciousness of our unity with the whole. This is not a

[1] 'Church and State,' p. 138.
[2] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. I., p. 131.

unity realised by yielding ourselves up to the animal instincts through which we merely co-operate with the mechanical order of nature. It is the unity implied in the exercise of reason through which we recognise our identity with the noumena, the unseen reality of things, distinct from, yet supporting the phenomenal world, the shows of sense. Understanding, when subordinated to reason, interprets natural phenomena as symbols of that conceived reality, revealed most of all in the personal will, in the 'power to say I am I.' And this, Coleridge would perhaps say, is the true meaning of Christ's real presence in the sacramental bread and wine. The words, 'this is my body,' had no special reference to those objects; they merely served as representatives of all nature, which is the body or external representation of the Logos, even as our reason is its inward presence to the will.

The Church of Christ, as a world-wide spiritual community, transcends all limitations of space and time. Questions about its chronological continuity and local habitation at any particular moment are 'without interest for an enlightened Protestant of the present day.'[1] On the other hand, 'a Christianity without a Church exercising spiritual authority is vanity and dissolution.' And Coleridge believed that some day the English nation would be taught this to its cost by the rapid spread of Popery.[2] In a note not intended for publication he uses still stronger language. Commenting on a saying of Donne's, that 'we have a clearer, that is a nearer light than the written Gospel, that is the Church,' he exclaims, 'True; yet he who should now venture to assert this truth, or even contend for a co-ordinateness of the Church and the Written Word, must bear to be thought a semi-Papist or an ultra high-Churchman. Still the truth is the truth.'[3]

As usual, 'the truth' must be understood in a Coleridgean sense. Evidently the object is not to strengthen authority, but to weaken it by transferring its seat from a book whose declarations are comparatively fixed and precise to a body whose composition and jurisdiction may be made to vary at the discretion of individual Churchmen. The historic Church has never

[1] 'Life of Wesley,' Vol. II., p. 95; 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 12.
[2] 'Aids to Reflection,' p. 243.
[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 86.

claimed to be more than the interpreter of that Written Word which this divine would subordinate, or at least not make superior, to her. Yet, curiously enough, this privilege of interpretation is elsewhere denied to the Church, or superseded by what is practically a boundless latitude of private judgment. On the question of Biblical inspiration a truly Catholic Christian admits no authority 'as coercive in the final decision but the declaration of the Book itself';[1] and the full-grown Christian needs no other creed than the Scriptures themselves.[2]

The passages just quoted deserve particular attention. Taken in connexion with the whole trend of his teaching, they prove beyond dispute that Coleridge was not what Carlyle calls him, 'the parent of spectral Puseyisms and ecclesiastical chimeras.' In this respect the great leader of the Oxford Movement, little as he knew about the writings of the Highgate sage, showed himself much better informed than the rival prophet. Newman saw with the intuition of genius, and hit off with careless felicity of expression, the real drift of what Coleridge thought and taught in describing him as one who 'indulged a liberty of speculation which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian.'[3] We have seen what these heathen conclusions were. We have seen that they were in truth a revival of neo-Platonism, reconstituted on the lines of Kant's criticism as developed into the absolutism of Schelling. The new 'reason' ostentatiously distinguishes itself from the old, but it exercises the same destructive action on religious belief; and the thing called faith, which is put in place of that belief, is simply obedience to the moral law conceived as deriving a mystical authority from the fundamental oneness of nature.

We have now to take Coleridge at his face-value as a professing Christian, and to show how in this character, to repeat Newman's words, he indulged a liberty of speculation which no Christian, as Christianity was then understood, could tolerate. It was on this side, much more than by his heathen philosophy, that he influenced English religion; and here also

[1] 'Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit,' p. 15.
[2] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 151.
[3] 'Essays,' Vol. I., p. 269.

the influence of Germany on his thoughts will appear as a conspicuous factor.

One of the first uses that Coleridge made of his knowledge of German was to read Lessing's controversial tracts, and also the fragments of Reimarus published by Lessing. From the latter he borrowed the word Bibliolatry as a contemptuous designation for the belief in Biblical infallibility, a notion which he stigmatised as 'if possible still more extravagant than that of Papal infallibility.'[1] When in Germany he also studied the written notes of Eichhorn's Lectures on the New Testament, besides making himself acquainted, then, or at some other time, with the same critic's views on Old Testament prophecy.[2] His whole stock of modern Biblical criticism seems to have been drawn from these few sources. Such as it was, however, in the general ignorance of German research then prevailing, it gave Coleridge a position of higher authority than any contemporary English writer on theology, except Bishop Marsh, could claim, and he turned it with incalculable effect against the traditional beliefs.

As has already been mentioned, Coleridge refused to accept Biblical inspiration on any authority but that of the Biblical writers themselves; their guarantee being understood to extend no further than the portions for which they were severally responsible. He found such a claim advanced by the writers of the larger part of the Prophetic books, and of the whole of the Apocalypse. These, he said, should be accepted as inspired truths, or rejected as enthusiastic delusions.[3] The alternative, however, must not be taken too seriously; and the specified portions of Scripture are to be regarded as a maximum rather than as a minimum of concession to popular religion; for, according to an admission dropped elsewhere, he 'does not know what to make of the Apocalypse,'[4] and therefore lets it alone—probably a polite way of classing it with Esdras or Enoch.

Among the Hebrew prophets he touches but slightly on the

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 154.

[2] Campbell's 'Life of Coleridge,' p. 97. 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 333, where he ungraciously calls Eichhorn an 'infidel.'

[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 191.

[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 131–2.

two test cases of what is now called the later Isaiah, and the Book of Daniel; and here his utterances suggest an economy of the truth. He will neither affirm nor deny the early date of the Cyrus prophecies; he both affirms and suggests a denial of Daniel's authenticity. Our judgment, as regards the latter, depends very much on our interpretation of the fourth empire. To identify this with Macedon is practically to give up the book as a prediction of the Christian dispensation, and therefore to deprive it of all value as a weapon in the armoury of Christian apologetics. And when that interest is removed, the weight of argument for its apocryphal character is felt to be irresistible. As usual, Coleridge is weak and shuffling. 'Is it quite clear,' he asks in one place, 'that the Macedonian was not the fourth empire?'[1] While in another place he argues that for a Macedonian writer to omit the Roman empire would be 'strange and inexplicable.'[2] At last, however, in disgust and alarm at Edward Irving's insane interpretations of prophecy, he gave a decisive adhesion to the modern view.[3]

Passing from the Bible as a miraculous anticipation of the future to the Bible considered as a narrative of past events, designed for our edification, we find Coleridge departing widely from the beliefs accepted by his pious English contemporaries. The Pentateuch is indeed unhesitatingly ascribed to Moses, but on grounds which make us doubt the critic's seriousness. 'One striking proof of the genuineness of the Mosaic books is that they contain precise prohibitions of all those things which David and Solomon actually did.'[4] The fact is indubitable; but it so irresistibly suggests an exactly opposite conclusion as to make one suspect either that the young clergyman who reports the words misunderstood their meaning, or that Coleridge was indulging in what Lamb might have called a little fun at his nephew's expense.

Middleton's views on the Fall, so much decried in their time, are reproduced by Coleridge. The second chapter of Genesis from verse four, and the third chapter, are to his mind as evidently symbolical as the first chapter is literal.[5] Literalism, however, does not mean the quality of representing things as

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 132. [2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 333.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 345, where, however, Daniel is not named.
[4] 'Table Talk,' p. 79. [5] 'Miscellanies,' p. 397.

they really happened, for 'it is inconceivable how anything can be created in time;'[1]—or indeed how anything can have been created at all.[2] Like Adam, Noah is a myth, or, as Coleridge expresses it, a representative man; which explains (one does not quite see how) the remarkable fact that no remains of prae-diluvial civilisation have been discovered even in the wilds of America.[3]

Jael, so highly praised by the prophetess Deborah, is held up to odium by Coleridge as a treacherous assassin,[4] and her action branded as a detestable murder; while the execution of Saul's descendants by David is with equal propriety described as one of his worst actions;[5] although it was to all appearances performed with Iahveh's full approval. The two instances are typical; if such deeds lie open to criticism, nothing in the historical books of the Old Testament can be exempt from it; and Coleridge would no doubt have permitted himself, had occasion offered, the same latitude of invective against any atrocity committed either by Israel as a nation or by any of its divinely commissioned leaders.

A disposition to welcome the dawn of the higher criticism may be observed in Coleridge's 'Table Talk.' He would rather call the Proverbs Solomonian than actually by Solomon.[6] He cannot believe Ecclesiastes to have been actually composed by Solomon.[7] He would conjecture that both books were written, or perhaps rather collected, about the time of Nehemiah.[8]

His utterances on the New Testament Canon are far more serious, and, from Newman's point of view, justify Newman's censure to the fullest extent. Coleridge rejects what he calls the Christopaedia, that is, the narratives of the birth of Jesus from a pure virgin, prefixed to the Gospels bearing the names of Matthew and Luke. The contradictions between these two

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 142.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 267.

[3] 'Miscellanies,' p. 307. I suppose this is a cryptic way of saying that there never was a deluge.

[4] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 344. Archdeacon Wilberforce, a theologian otherwise in full sympathy with Coleridge, referred to her last July in the pulpit as one of the glories of her sex.

[5] 'Aids to Reflection,' p. 227.

[6] P. 34. [7] P. 33. [8] P. 188.

narratives are, he observes, palpable, and have been fruitful of doubts respecting the historic value of the Gospels themselves. The story of a virgin-birth was unknown to or not recognised by the Apostles Paul and John. John's silence is an almost overwhelming argument against its apostolicity. Coleridge can readily believe that Christ's having an earthly father might be requisite to his perfect manhood. The opposite view, so far from supporting the doctrine of the Trinity and the Filial Godhead of the Eternal Word, if not altogether irreconcilable with this faith, greatly weakens and bedims its evidence. But if asked whether he believes our Lord to have been the Son of Mary by Joseph, Coleridge takes refuge in his usual agnostic hiding-place, and declares that it is a point of religion with him to have no belief one way or the other.[1]

For the rest, Matthew's Gospel, as we have it, is not the earliest but the latest of the four; and under Coleridge's very free handling the comparison between the Son of Man and Jonah is summarily removed from the text as a gloss of some pious though unlearned Christian of the first century.[2] There seems no reason why other passages should not be disposed of, when occasion requires, by the same convenient method.

We seem to find a brilliant anticipation of Renan in the characterisation of early Christian Jerusalemite communism as 'a very gross and carnal, not to say fanatical, misunderstanding of our Lord's words,' which 'had the effect of reducing the Churches of the Circumcision to beggary, and of making them an unnecessary burthen on the new Churches in Greece and elsewhere.' Hence it is difficult to accept the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira as a miracle.[3] The gift of tongues does not imply an acquaintance with foreign languages.[4] The Epistles to Timothy and Titus, soon to figure so largely as authorities in the Tractarian argument, are only Pauline, not by Paul.[5] There are serious difficulties besetting the authenticity of both the Epistles ascribed to Peter.[6] The Apocalypse, as already noticed,

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 73; Vol. II., pp. 154 and 210; and 'Confessions,' p. 134.

[2] 'Church and State,' Appendix C, p. 285.

[3] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 232.

[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 125.

[5] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 197; 'Table Talk,' p. 253.

[6] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 344.

is let alone—a phrase which, when used by Coleridge, may without rashness be interpreted as amounting to total rejection.

Less ceremony is observed in speaking of the devil. That personage is 'a mere fiction, or at the best an allegory, supported by a few popular phrases and figures of speech used incidentally or dramatically by the Evangelists.' For, indeed, the existence of a personal intelligent evil being, the counterpart and antagonist of God, is in express contradiction to the most express declarations of Holy Writ.[1] 'The dogma of a personal Satan is an accommodation to the current popular creed which they (Peter and Paul) continued to believe.'[2] And their language about the Day of Judgment may perhaps be similarly explained away.[3] Angels fare no better than devils. Spirits are not necessarily souls or I's.[4] Augustine has observed that reason only requires three essential kinds—God, man, beast; and it is no matter to us whether angels are the spirits of just men made perfect, or a distinct class of moral and rational creatures.[5]

Coleridge, in fact, for all his professions of attachment to the Church, was essentially a heretic, believing or disbelieving just what he chose, and just as much as he chose. Whatever 'found' him, as he puts it, brought with it an irresistible evidence of having proceeded from the Holy Spirit. Such credentials are, of course, not limited to the Bible. In a novel by Thomas Hughes, a disciple of Maurice, and therefore indirectly a disciple of Coleridge, a young man on the very point of succumbing to temptation is 'found' and rescued by a passage in the 'Apologia' of Plato; and in his earlier days, at least, the master would have admitted that Plato was as much 'inspired' as St. John.[6] So also nothing that contradicts Reason is to be believed; though how a principle essentially self-contradictory can itself be contradicted does not appear.

[1] 'Miscellanies,' p. 158.
[2] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 318.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] 'Miscellanies,' p. 171.
[5] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 261.
[6] I hope it will be understood that this reference is not made with the object of throwing any doubt on the orthodoxy of the author of 'Tom Brown at Oxford.'

Anyhow, whatever may be its justification, we have seen to what lengths the license of disbelief may be pushed.

'The full-grown Christian needs no creeds.'[1] Not only does he not need them, but under the guidance of Reason—or of Coleridge—he will pick holes in all three. The Apostles' Creed insists on the Virgin-birth, which it is a matter of religion with our critic to leave doubtful. The Resurrection of the Body is explained away by calmly asserting that the word body, as used by St. Paul and his Master, means the personality.[2] At this rate a more advanced Christian—Tolstoi, for instance—might explain personality to mean the never-ending consequences of a man's actions. In the Nicene Creed homöousios is not to be translated 'being of one substance with';[3] apparently because that wording makes the notion implied slightly more definite than it would otherwise be. As for the so-called Athanasian Creed, it is downright heretical on account of its omission or implicit denial of the Filial subordination in the Godhead.[4] What this or any other Creed tells about a future life left Coleridge quite unconcerned. When he discusses the punishment of the wicked it is with reference chiefly to one's own feelings and the practical effect of this or that view on men's conduct; his own leaning being towards annihilation.[5]

It remains to consider in what relation this comprehensive thinker stood to the various theological tendencies of his own and of the following age. Sir Leslie Stephen tells us that his brother Fitzjames, who ended with complete disbelief in Christianity, was in early life much affected by the arguments of Thomas Paine, but felt comforted by an impression received from his father that 'Coleridge and other wise men had made a satisfactory apology for the Bible.'[6] And Professor Goldwin Smith, when still in what he has since called 'the penumbra of orthodoxy,' recorded his persuasion that 'Coleridge rather than Butler has been the anchor by which the intellect of England

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 151.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 150.
[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 190.
[4] 'Table Talk,' p. 45.
[5] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., pp. 253 and 265.
[6] 'Life of Sir J. F. Stephen,' p. 84.

has ridden out, so far as it has ridden out, the storms of this tempestuous age.[1] The foregoing account of Coleridge's theology—even discounting what I believe to be its fundamentally pantheistic character—will perhaps convince an impartial reader that this 'apology for the Bible' was one rather in the sense contemplated, not without some feeling of scandal, by George III., than in the original Greek sense of a complete exculpation of the defendant. Indeed, it hardly amounts even to that. For whenever Coleridge touches on the points attacked by Paine, he practically throws up the case for his client. The story of the Fall is a myth; there never were any such persons as Adam and Eve; never any personal devil, in the form of a serpent or otherwise. No defence of the atrocities denounced by Paine is attempted; while the epithets affixed to the crimes of Jael and of David imply full agreement with the moral standard set up in opposition to Scriptural authority. Principles of criticism equivalent to Paine's are applied to the birth stories of the Gospel, and with the same destructive result. The theory of inherited guilt, and the theory that God's wrath against man was appeased by the suffering and death of his innocent Son, seem no less immoral to the apologist than to the infidel. And a casual reference to the *apparent* contradictions in the threefold narrative of the Resurrection[2] makes it probable that Coleridge had a white flag in his pocket ready to be run up over that position also.

Whether all these surrenders were particularly helpful to the Church is another question. At any rate, Professor Goldwin Smith's nautical metaphor seems rather inappropriate to the services rendered, if any. So far from supplying a new anchor for the ecclesiastical ship, Coleridge slipped the existing cables and steered her into the unknown waters of the German Ocean.

If Coleridge's theological position betrays marked affinities with the rationalism of Paine, it stands in equally marked opposition to the ruling and rising orthodoxies of the age. There is no mistaking his attitude towards Paley. It is one of bitter and contemptuous repudiation. The refurbished argument for theism from final causes did not appeal to a thinker whose education, begun in the school of Hume, had been completed

[1] 'Rational Religion,' p. 77.

[2] 'Notes, Theological, Political, etc.,' p. 120.

in the school of Kant. 'I could make a slashing review of the "Natural Theology,"' he writes in 1803.[1] Nor can the 'Evidences' have been more to his taste. Paley founded the credibility of Christianity on miracles attested by the report of men whose veracity was guaranteed by their willingness to suffer martyrdom on its behalf. Coleridge holds that the truth through Christ has its evidence in itself; and he observes that 'the supernatural relations even of the very best and most veracious men' ought to be received with extreme caution.[2] To Paley the practical importance of Christianity consisted in the sanction it gave to moral conduct by the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments. To Coleridge such a reference seemed the destruction of morality itself, the degradation of duty to the level of selfish calculation. The dictates of the moral law might indeed coincide with the suggestions of self-interest, but only as the movement of the sun in heaven is reflected by the shadow of the dial's gnomon which indicates its path by intercepting its radiance.

With the Evangelicals, on the other hand, Coleridge felt himself in far closer sympathy; and theirs perhaps is the only contemporary school to which he never places himself in avowed antagonism. Like them, he finds the very essence of Christianity in the recognition of human nature as fundamentally sinful, and in the revealed necessity for its redemption from sin by the intercession of the Incarnate Word. Like them, he appeals by preference to the self-evidencing truth of the Gospel. Like them, he declaims against Popish superstition, and glories in the name of Protestant. And so long as Christianity was limited to the enunciation of such generalities, they might have been content to accept him as a genuine believer. But from the moment that a more expanded statement and a more detailed definition of the faith is required, a divergence between their respective interpretations begins which can only end in accusations of wilful blindness on one side and of veiled infidelity on the other. To specify the points of disagreement would be merely to recapitulate the whole of the previous analysis, and more particularly to repeat what has been said of Coleridge's concessions to Paine. And, apart from differences on technical points of theology, few Englishmen could have

[1] 'Letters,' p. 424. [2] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 43.

been more out of sympathy with such an ignorant and illiterate party as the Evangelicals then were than the great poet, critic, and metaphysician, with his splendid literary, philosophic, and scientific culture, his restless intellectual curiosity, his genial sympathy with 'all thoughts, all passions, all delights,' and his identification of the best prayer with the widest love for animated things.

It seems strange that Newman, while summarily denouncing Coleridge's teaching as heathenish, should still include it among the antecedents of the Oxford Movement, thus giving a sort of indirect sanction to Carlyle's unscrupulous association of the two directions. For, whether viewed as a charge or a claim, the derivation can only be admitted with restrictions which deprive it of all specific value. Doubtless the author of 'Aids to Reflection' and 'Church and State' did much to encourage that spirit of serious piety, that renewed interest in theological studies, of which the 'Tracts for the Times' were the most far-shining, but neither the sole, nor the first, nor the most enduring manifestation. What they stood for would certainly not have won Coleridge's approval even in its beginnings, while its last consequences would have incurred his dread and hatred. How little was implied by his affected deference to Church-authority has already been shown, and what havoc his criticism made with the Scriptural authority to which the Oxford leaders in their first stage invariably appealed. If his philosophy gave an apparent support to their favourite dogma of the Real Presence, it countenanced the Lutheran no less than the High Anglican view, and agreed best of all with a purely pantheistic interpretation of nature. As to their other great shibboleth, the dogma of Baptismal Regeneration, his opinion of it stands recorded in language of exceptional decision. 'The assertion that what is phenomenally bread and wine is substantially the Body and Blood of Christ does not shock my common sense more than that a few drops of water sprinkled on the face should produce a momentous change, even a regeneration, in the soul; and does not outrage my moral feelings half as much.'[1] And he sarcastically asks the literalists why, if they appeal to the words of Scripture, have they assumed the right to substitute sprinkling for total immersion?

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 329.

Coleridge's opposition to the Tractarians appears still more irreconcilable whenever we have an opportunity of comparing his views on religious history with theirs. He explains the spread of Christianity neither by the direct interference of Providence, nor by the propaganda of a wonder-working Church, but in a way still more philosophical than Gibbon's, in a way that even anticipates Renan, by pointing to the destruction of local patriotism and local worships by Roman imperialism, with the consequent necessity for replacing them by a universal religion.[1] Towards the Fathers he is not more respectful than Middleton. Unlike Jeremy Taylor, he will not allow the title of Saint to Cyprian. Augustine is more honoured; but the least of such Reformers as Luther, Melanchthon, and Calvin is not inferior to him, and worth a brigade of Cyprians, Firmilians, and the like.[2]

Towards Rome Coleridge shows the violence of a whole Orange Lodge. He rebukes the Anglican dignitaries who spoke of the Roman Church in contrast with the Protestant Dissenters as 'a right dear though erring sister.'[3] It is full of superstition and imposture. The Papal monarchy is 'the trunk circulating a poison-sap through the branches successively grafted thereon.'[4] Roman Catholic countries are given up to the most despicable and idolatrous superstition.[5] 'If the Papacy and the Romish hierarchy as far as it is Papal be not Anti-Christ, the guilt of schism in its most aggravated form lies on the authors of the Reformation.'[6]

Needless to say that Coleridge absolved them of any such guilt. For him the Reformation is 'ever-blessed.'[7] Luther is in parts the most evangelical writer he knows after the Apostles and apostolic men.[8] His views of English history anticipate Froude and Carlyle. Sharon Turner has succeeded in detaching from the portrait of our first Protestant King (Henry VIII.) the layers of soot and blood with which pseudo-Catholic hate and pseudo-Protestant candour have coated it.[9] On the other hand, the High Church movement under the first

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. I., p. 230.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 351.
[3] 'Church and State,' p. 143.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 131.
[5] 'Confessions,' p. 143.
[6] 'Church and State,' p. 145.
[7] 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton,' p. 202.
[8] 'Table Talk,' p. 47.
[9] 'Church and State,' p. 55.

Stuarts is so far from appealing to his sympathies that he represents its leaders as combining the obnoxious features of the two religious bodies which in later life were the chief objects of his detestation. Montague, Laud, and their confederates represent the spirit of a conjoint Romanism and Socinianism.[1] Charles I. is 'an imbecile would-be despot;'[2] Cromwell a hero who 'gave a thousand proofs of his attachment to the best interests of human nature.'[3] He and Ireton had as good a right to put Charles to death as Hampden had to defend himself against the King in battle.[4] The great Commonwealth's men are the stars of a narrow interspace of blue between the black clouds of the first and second Charles's reigns.[5] The great body of Nonconformists to whom Baxter and Calamy belonged were not willingly dissenters from the established Church, but an orthodox and numerous portion of the Church.[6] The royal and prelatical party in the reign of Charles II. were 'a bestial herd;'[7] James II. was 'a wretched bigot.'[8]

Among the manifestations of a reactionary spirit on the part of modern High Churchmen nothing has been more noticeable than their insistence on the observation of saints' days. But here also Coleridge would have refused to follow them. He is so far a Puritan as to think nothing would have been lost if Christmas and Good Friday had been the only week-days made holy-days, and Easter the only Lord's day especially distinguished.[9]

After all these successive eliminations there remains one section of religious society in England with whom the gifted thinker from whom we must now take leave can be fully and frankly identified, one tendency to which his seemingly wasted efforts communicated at the decisive moment an irreversible impulse, atoning for his ruined life, and opening the way for

[1] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 116.
[2] 'Life of Wesley, Vol. I., p. 129.
[3] 'English Divines, Vol. II. p. 13.
[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 97.
[5] 'Church and State,' p. 102.
[6] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 116.
[7] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 331.
[8] 'Miscellanies,' p. 203.
[9] 'English Divines,' Vol. II., p. 88.

achievements so vast that in their fame his fame has been swallowed up. With all his dislike for the Stuart Latitudinarians, Coleridge was, in fact, the real founder of their modern representatives, the Broad Church, including under that heading not only the theologians, clerical and lay, who have openly adopted and gloried in the name, but also those who, like Maurice, and in a very different line of thought, James Martineau, abjuring all sectarian distinctions, have been content to class themselves as Churchmen or Christians without epithets. The group of distinguished scholars and divines who, even before his death, began to draw away from the Evangelical and Tractarian parties alike, Arnold, Hare, Thirlwall, Maurice, and John Sterling, were all either his disciples or his admirers; and their tradition was continued by Stanley, Jowett, Kingsley, and Robertson; while for every stage in the development of the school some hint or precedent or germ may be found in the recorded utterances of the master. Like him, they have protested, although as a rule with less violence, against any return to the yoke of authority and tradition. Like him, they have appealed from the theological fashions of the hour to the doctrinal standards of a more philosophic age. Like him, they have welcomed the application of modern methods to Biblical criticism. And finally, like him, though not until more than one generation had passed since the prime of his middle life, which also was the period of his most complete emancipation from mythological imagery, or what he would himself have called the original sin of idolatry, they have tended with increasing clearness to resolve all dogma into a symbolical representation of the ideal universe to which the distinctions of space and time do not apply. In carrying out this transformation they also have followed the track of German idealism, with the difference that their guide has not been Schelling, but Schelling's far more logical, systematic, and consistent successor, Hegel, not unknown to Coleridge himself, but first revealed to England at large not long after Coleridge's death by his young disciple Strauss' 'Life of Jesus,' and afterwards studied at first hand with ever-increasing ardour in the two great English Universities. Unhappily the idealistic interpretation of theology, whether as manipulated by Coleridge himself or by his English followers down to the close of the nineteenth century, has

always carried with it a certain taint of insincerity, much less strongly marked, if present at all, in the German school, where it was originally practised. It was clear enough to any one who chose to open his eyes that Hegel rejected whatever had been known before his time as religious belief; and even had the master's utterances been more ambiguous, there was no mistaking the consequences drawn from them by his disciples of the left wing. Among ourselves the relations between Hegelianism and theology have been more equivocal; some of the school have left it doubtful whether or in what sense they retained any religious belief; while others whose private opinions were no secret have studiously avoided giving expression to their total rejection of the popular creed.

In estimating the moral value of such reticences charges of prevarication must not lightly be entertained even by those to whom circumstances have granted the rare felicity of speaking out their whole mind without disguise. We have to recall the delicate and complex conditions, unknown to any other European country, under which new ideas have to be propagated in England if they are ever to get a hearing at all. We have to recall the continual reference of thought to practical issues, the continual interference of half-educated persons, as in old Athens, with controversies the windings of which they cannot follow, but the real gist of which they often seize with the almost intuitive sagacity of men trained in legal contests, in politics, or in business. Theirs is what Coleridge would have called the logic of the Understanding as opposed to the logic of the Reason; and they would carry away a totally false impression if the negations implied in certain philosophies of religion were laid before them in a clear and summary compendium. The thinkers whom they denounce as hypocrites or dissemblers are content to be judged by the highest moral standard; but that means a standard which takes every relevant circumstance into account. They assert that Christianity as a regenerating force has always operated on a basis of idea and feeling rather than on a basis of fact, or if of fact, then fact lifted on to a higher plane by an ideal interpretation of its content. When their official position is challenged, the narrowness and presumption of their assailants does not permit them to explain, as they well might explain, with Coleridge, that the endowments of the national Church are

really a fund for the sustentation of the progressive element in the nation, for moral training, and unremunerative intellectual research. And if they cared to recriminate they might tax their opponents with assuming a not less extensive right of private judgment in explaining away whatever appears inconsistent with their favourite tenets in the traditional doctrine and discipline of the Church. For in truth comprehensiveness cannot exist without a certain ambiguity and equivocation of which all parties in turn take advantage. It has become a commonplace to repeat this of the Anglican Church; but it is really applicable to any church claiming the name of Catholic; nor can the smallest sect hold together without a similar elasticity and relative freedom.

May we not go further still and contend that Christianity itself, and not Christianity only, but all religion, is a compromise, an embodiment of the mystic spirit in mundane conditions? To none should this be more intelligible than to ourselves, seeing that compromise is the pervading fact of English history, and has not for the first time been applied to English religion in the nineteenth century. What that century first did was to make the spirit of compromise self-conscious and avowed. But the forms of compromise, like the positions between which they mediate, vary to infinity. It was Coleridge's merit to have sketched an arrangement of the kind between the rationalism of Hume and the religiosity of Wilberforce, which, with some inconsiderable modifications, has been found available for a whole school of thought during the seventy years that have elapsed since his death.

CHAPTER VII

UTILITARIANISM AND ROMANCE

COLERIDGE spent his last years surrounded by admiring listeners; and, as I have said, he traced beforehand the path which the advanced religious thought of England was destined for generations to pursue. Nevertheless, his teaching as a whole was accepted by none; in general philosophy he founded no school, and left no successor. Accidental circumstances, combined with individual temperament, had not allowed his vast intellect to co-ordinate into a single coherent system the immense variety of interests over which it ranged at will. Nor was this the only drawback to his influence on English thought. If he was before his contemporaries in speculative theology, he lagged far behind them in practical politics. He professed to represent the aristocratic liberalism of Cromwell and Milton; and in opposing Catholic Emancipation he certainly reproduced one side of it faithfully enough. But in discountenancing Parliamentary Reform, the abolition of West Indian slavery, the new Poor Law, and the remission of taxation, he had the sanction of no great names in earlier English history; his attitude can only be accounted for by a blind dread of change as such, or by helpless submission to the more resolute conservatism of his friend Southey. On these points his more discriminating, though not his least ardent, admirers were in sympathy with the school of Bentham rather than with him. And it was by combining with the germinal ideas of that school that his own best ideas were fertilised and developed into fruit.[1]

Bentham's school, known also as the English Utilitarians and the Philosophical Radicals, was, even before it came under

[1] Compare the essay on Coleridge in Mill's 'Dissertations and Discussions,' Vol. I.

Coleridge's influence, a very complex growth, not by any means representing a single homogeneous body of doctrine worked out by one commanding intellect. What people called Benthamism rather resulted from the convergence of various tendencies drawn together by a temporary community of aims, but not necessarily connected in principle, and quite capable of breaking into mutual hostility when the causes of their provisional alliance had ceased to operate. As a collective body the school has become intimately associated with the old political economy taught by Adam Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo, and also with the extreme democratic opinions held by radical politicians in England before and after 1832. Yet Bentham himself was not primarily a political economist, but a legist and a law reformer; although one of his most brilliant and successful productions, the 'Defence of Usury,' is devoted to continuing and amending the work of Adam Smith. Nor in the earlier and better period of his intellectual activity was he a democrat. Brought up a Tory, he disliked the American revolutionists, and wished the Allies success in their crusade against French Jacobinism. Indeed, like some of his Continental contemporaries, he at first looked on an enlightened autocracy as the readiest means for carrying his philanthropic schemes into effect. The resistance of the privileged orders to those schemes afterwards led him to turn for support to the unenfranchised masses, whose interests seemed to coincide more nearly with the demands of a theory which made the greatest happiness of the greatest number the ultimate criterion of right conduct. But at no time did he admit that the majority had a natural right to exercise sovereignty over the whole community; it was indeed a cardinal point with him that natural rights of any sort were a mere figment; nor had nature herself, as a half-personified metaphysical entity, any place in his system or his regards.

Here we touch on the fundamental point of distinction and future divergence between Benthamism proper and the old political economy with which it has sometimes been inaccurately identified. The French economists, from whom Adam Smith took his cue, set out with the idea of a fundamental antithesis between nature and man, inherited from the earliest Greek moral philosophy, embalmed in Roman

jurisprudence, and brought to the front by the revived study of Stoicism in the seventeenth century. According to this idea, the whole universe is a vast system of means and ends, constructed for the attainment of the happiest and most perfect order by the smooth and silent working of unconscious agencies.[1] Man, or rather civilised man, alone offers a melancholy exception to this beneficent arrangement. Under the sinister influence of kings, priests, and conquerors he has departed more and more widely from a primitive state of felicity. His boasted arts and sciences have served as ministers to luxury, luxury has bred disease, and disease has been still further aggravated by the artificial remedies applied to its cure. At the same time designing impostors have practised on his ignorance and filled his mind with superstitious terrors, substituting the degrading fiction of a so-called revelation for the sublime truths of natural religion. To escape from such manifold miseries only one course remains—fortunately for us the simplest and easiest imaginable. Follow nature: study and imitate her laws; return to primitive ways of living, or at least train your children in them if it is too late to begin yourself; take lessons from the wild animals and from savage tribes; do your share of manual labour towards providing the necessaries of life; all will then go well and every one will be happy.

This theory of Natural Law fell in to some extent with the old English individualism as expounded by Locke in his 'Treatise on Government.' According to the philosopher of Whiggism, civil society originated in a general agreement by virtue of which human beings brought their natural rights with them into the community, parting only with as much as was necessary to secure the remainder against aggression. In other words, the sovereign has no right to take more from the people in taxes than is needed to pay the expense of protecting life and property against domestic and foreign assailants.

Such a view tends to restrict the functions of government within the narrowest possible limits; and we are all familiar with it under the name of *laissez-faire*. But Locke foresaw none of the extreme consequences to which it would be pushed

[1] Compare Matthew Arnold's great sonnet, 'One lesson, Nature, let me learn from thee!'

by his modern successors. His object was to provide a philosophical basis for the resistance to Stuart absolutism, not to expose the immorality of state-education or of industrial protection. But his influence doubtless co-operated with the theory of natural law in inspiring the first attacks of the French economists on administrative interference with what seemed the natural course of manufacture and trade. We owe to them the phrase *laissez-faire;* but originally it meant no more than that industrialists should be allowed to manufacture their goods as they thought fit; that a well-meaning but ill-advised Minister should not send inspectors up and down the country with instructions to tear off the loom every strip of cloth not made in strict accordance with the regulations of a fussy and perhaps interested administration. Similarly with their other great watchword, *laissez-passer*, always closely associated with *laissez-faire*. It by no means implied a demand for world-wide free-trade, but only the modest petition that the internal trade of France should be liberated from vexatious tolls, and that grain in particular should be let pass without artificial hindrances from one French province to another.

But while Quesnay and the other French physiocrats, as they were called, gave this new and important extension to Locke's theory of individual liberty, they did not share his horror of absolute government as such. In accordance with the French autocratic tradition, they persuaded themselves that an absolute hereditary monarchy, less hampered even than that of Louis XV., was the best possible instrument for safeguarding individuals in the possession of their inalienable rights; or, to use a still more metaphysical expression, for promulgating and enforcing the law of nature. Thus they left open the possibility of a very active and searching interference with individual liberty on behalf of the alleged general interest, including a new protectionism, wiser perhaps than Colbert's, but not less fatal to personal initiative, and a state-education having for its object to model the minds of the whole people on a single pattern. Indeed, the very fact of their taking China as the model of how an empire should be governed shows to what developments the theory of natural rights, as interpreted by an absolutist tradition, might lead.

When the study of political economy spread from France

to Great Britain a new era began, not only for the history of trade, but also for the history of liberty. Principles derived from Locke, but transformed into new types by adaptation to a Continental environment, speedily reverted to the parent stock when restored to their original habitat. In a country where individualism and self-reliance had always been encouraged, and where government had long been an object of suspicion rather than of confidence, *laissez-faire* acquired a new meaning, more extended than that belonging to the French words as first applied. The phrase came to connote a censure on all state-interference with private business as meddlesome and mischievous. And although much less was said about nature, the idea of nature as a guide really dominated to a greater extent in Britain than abroad; just as the English park was much more like a wilderness than the Continental garden.

With Quesnay following nature meant ascertaining by a study of the world about us and of its laws what conduct is most conducive to health and happiness; and natural right meant liberty to pursue the course so ascertained. Such liberty only belongs to the wise and good, and can only be granted to those whom the tutelary authority in the state is pleased to regard as such. With Adam Smith and his disciples, on the other hand, nature means the totality of impulses and instincts by which the individual members of a society are animated; and their contention is that the best arrangements result from giving free play to those forces, in the confidence that partial failures will be far more than compensated by successes elsewhere, and that the pursuit of his own interest by each will work out in the greatest happiness of all. Increasing division of labour is the very law of developing industry; and it is through the division of labour that every one finds an opportunity for the exercise of his peculiar faculties, to the enormous benefit both of himself and of the community. And as there is a division of labour between individuals, so likewise there is a division of labour between nations. The inhabitants of each country naturally tend to produce what its soil, climate, and geographical position, co-operating with their own genius, permit them to turn out in the greatest abundance. Hence the arrangement dictated by nature is that no obstacle should be placed in the way of their supplying one another with the

commodities which are most needed in the one place and manufactured to the most advantage in the other. In a word, free labour should be accompanied by free trade.

While the public interest is best served by the unfettered activity of each person acting singly, assemblages of persons pursuing the same industry are apt to band together for the public detriment. Evidently the government will not be free from this tendency; and therefore the best constitution seems to be that in which the various interests making up the community are represented in proportion to their relative numbers and importance. In accordance with this principle, English political economists have generally been favourable to the democratic side.

Bentham agreed with Adam Smith, and indeed with nearly the whole body of eighteenth-century thought, in holding that men are mainly actuated by a regard for their own interest, conceived on the average as the largest pecuniary profit obtainable with the smallest trouble and risk. But while Adam Smith was chiefly engaged in studying cases where the interest of the individual went hand in hand with the interest of the community, Bentham was chiefly engaged in studying cases where their interests were opposed. As a law-reformer he found himself in conflict with two classes, very unlike in their social status, but not unlike in the extent and virulence of their predatory activity. These were the criminal classes and the legal classes. The criminals appeared as open enemies of the community; the judges and lawyers, under pretence of shielding it against wrong, perverted the whole machinery of legislation and judicial procedure into a means for filling their own pockets, thus becoming a permanent drain on its resources as well as a dangerous encouragement to the law-breakers. Bentham's object was therefore to reorganise the machinery in such a way as to bring the interests of these two sets of persons, now actuated by sinister interests, into coincidence with the general interest, to make it impossible for any one to promote his own happiness without at the same time promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

With such an object in view, Bentham's attitude towards nature could not but be widely different from that of Adam

Smith and the economists generally. He was not for letting things alone, but for continually interfering with them, readjusting their relations, and giving them new directions. Various existing laws, no doubt, had to be repealed; but many more new laws had to be enacted; a variety of anti-social actions, hitherto committed with impunity, had to be forcibly restrained; while virtuous actions, hitherto entrusted to the precarious support of public opinion, benevolent sentiment, and religious hopes, were henceforth to be encouraged by the more certain and substantial rewards which a public-spirited legislature would provide. In this way Benthamism seemed to promise an immense extension rather than a restriction of the functions of government—possibly ending in a benevolent despotism even more thorough-going than that foreshadowed by Quesnay on the model of Chinese mandarinism; for Quesnay still acknowledged the sanctity of natural rights, whereas rights had no natural or independent existence in the Benthamite ethics. They were creatures of convention, means—it might be merely provisional means—for attaining the sole absolute end, that is, the greatest possible happiness of all sentient beings. For Bentham, even more than for Burke, the revolutionary declaration of the Rights of Man was a mere string of anarchic fallacies.

Yet unreasoned and inconsistent with experience as the assumptions of the revolutionists appeared, law reformers, like all other reformers, had more to hope from an alliance with them than with their reactionary opponents, even if these had been able to lay down the maxims of expediency with as much wisdom and eloquence as Burke. The age of enlightened despotism had closed in blind terror at its own success. Democracy must in its turn be enlightened, or all hopes of progress were vain. At this crisis in the development of his system, Bentham was joined by a young Scottish journalist, possibly of less intellectual power than himself, but of deeper philosophic culture, far manlier character, much wider knowledge of the world, and gifted, above all, with a commanding personal influence, an aptitude for management, for dealing with other minds, totally wanting to the utilitarian chief. Bentham, no doubt, had a personal charm, a magnetism of his own, as Coleridge had also; but, like the magnet, though

he could draw and hold, he could not wield; men willingly worked for him, but he does not seem to have directed them in their work. That James Mill—for it is of him I speak—should consent to act and to be known as Bentham's lieutenant was honourable to both, but more to the younger than to the elder philosopher, whose childlike petulance he bore with a dignity and fortitude which his naturally impatient and haughty temperament must have made doubly difficult to maintain.

James Mill is justly celebrated, both for his own writings, and even more as the father and educator of his school's future chief. But his immense services to utilitarianism, and through it to English thought in general, have never yet received adequate recognition. There can be little doubt that he first brought it into line with the democratic movement. There can be no doubt at all that before making Bentham's acquaintance he was already an ardent Liberal, in the political sense of the term. When or how he became such is not known with precision. But it seems highly probable that the enthusiasm excited by the French Revolution had at least a share in his conversion. At Edinburgh the eloquence of Dugald Stewart excited his admiration to the highest pitch; and Stewart's sympathies were with the reforming party. In London he rates Fox as the 'foremost man in the House of Commons by many degrees;'[1]—although, as an orator, not to be compared with the Scottish professor.[2] Bentham, on the other hand, was, as I have said, a Tory, who wished the Revolution to be put down by force of arms. But in 1817 he comes out with a reform catechism, advocating practically universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual parliaments. There seems, then, every probability that his conversion was effected by James Mill, with whom he had lived on terms of the closest intimacy during the nine preceding years. To Mill, at any rate, is due the famous 'Treatise on Government,' published in 1820 as a supplement to the fifth edition of the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica,' which first gave a philosophical foundation to the Radical creed, and long continued to embody the official programme of its school.

[1] Bain's 'Life o James Mill,' p. 43.

[2] Macvey Napier's 'Correspondence,' p. 27.

To James Mill also belongs the credit of having associated utilitarianism with the teaching of political economy, selecting for its purposes what was long to remain the standard form of economical doctrine. He was the connecting-link between Ricardo and Bentham; Ricardo's great work was brought out through his urgency and encouragement;[1] and its principles were forthwith adopted by himself and his friends.

Another point, rather neglected by previous historians, but one whose importance will, it is hoped, be appreciated by readers of this work, is the Hellenising tendency of Mill's mind, his enthusiasm for the ethical spirit of classical antiquity. As a student at Edinburgh we find him a devoted reader of Plato, in days when Plato was looked on as an unpractical dreamer, or, worse still, as the creator of a mystical theology; and his Greek scholarship was such as to suggest his being put forward as a candidate for the Greek chair at Glasgow. He certainly succeeded in imparting a good reading knowledge of the language at a very early age to the son whose education he undertook. Whether these studies 'imbued him,' as his biographer thinks probable, 'with the democratic ideal of government,'[2] may be doubted—Plato's influence, at any rate, would have a directly opposite tendency—but they certainly did him the much more valuable and needful service of awakening an enthusiasm which seems beyond the power of modern literature to communicate. Reviewing Fox's unfinished 'History of the Revolution of 1688,' Mill dwells particularly on its moral tone, comparing it, in this respect, with the works of Greece and Rome, to the disparagement of most modern historians, the perusal of whom their coldness makes a task. The ancients, unlike the moderns, lay the greatest stress on the lessons of morality in their conception of history; and it is well known that they excel in celebrating public spirit as a high virtue.[3]

It was no doubt with a view to indoctrinating him with the same sentiments that James Mill gave the classics, and especially the Greek classics, so large a place in the education of his son and destined successor. Nor was the result inadequate to the highest expectations he could have entertained. His whole life long the younger Mill was glowing through and

[1] 'Life of James Mill,' p. 153.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

through with an ethical enthusiasm which, as some think, remained unsatisfied by the ideals of the school in which he grew up. And he also has left on record, in language more passionate than his father's, the same exalted estimate of the services rendered to humanity by Greece and Rome as sources of stimulating instruction. Sketching the outlines of an ideal education, he insists on the large place that should be given in it to ancient literature: 'because it brings before us the thoughts and actions of many great minds . . . related and exhibited in a manner tenfold more impressive, tenfold more calculated to call forth high aspirations, than in any modern literature.'[1] And he repeats the same recommendation of Hellenic studies more than thirty years later in his St. Andrew's Address, dwelling more particularly on 'the enthusiasm both for the search after truth and for applying it to its highest uses,'[2] which Plato has such an incomparable power of communicating to his readers.

Another pupil of James Mill's, George Grote, was animated through life by the same passion for Hellenism; and was enabled by circumstances to propagate it with more success than any other member of the school, perhaps more than any other English writer of the century.

Bentham himself had no such love for classic literature. Although he was bred a scholar, and possessed of high literary gifts, his private tastes led him by preference to music rather than to poetry, and to the physical sciences, especially chemistry, rather than to the history of mankind. If anything could be learned from the ancients—which seemed doubtful enough—it might, in his opinion, be learned with more advantage from translations than from the original text. Science, not literature, is given the foremost place in his model system of education, as the most useful acquisition; and much of the younger Mill's eloquent protest against this narrow view of utility may be read as a direct advocacy of his father's system in opposition to the system of his father's reputed master.

In this way utilitarianism, which had hitherto been only remotely connected by descent with the Renaissance, was brought into living communion with the classic humanism

[1] 'Dissertations and Discussions,' Vol. I., p. 202.
[2] 'Inaugural Address,' p. 33.

which had been, in its first inception, the very soul of the great movement known under that name. We may even say that the young Puritan from Edinburgh brought with him an appreciation of the true spirit of Hellenism as a moral force, a power making for righteousness, unknown to those earlier scholars who had approached it more from the artistic or the purely intellectual side, as a deliverance from Christian asceticism. That battle had been fought and won, and the time had now come to profit by the lessons of higher spiritualism so abundantly conveyed in Greek philosophy without the sanction of fanaticism or superstition. The secular educationists had their Bible also, which they could propose as a substitue for the Evangelical Bible, on an appeal to the same ultimate principles of justice and of truth.

From its beginning the utilitarian school had been profoundly rationalistic, and indeed was the chief underground channel by which the rationalism of the eighteenth century flowed into the nineteenth. Bentham himself was an atheist, and that not merely in a cold speculative way, but with a feeling of hostility to theological belief not less passionate than that which animated a Condorcet or a Shelley. 'The spirit of dogmatic theology,' he writes, 'poisons everything it touches.'[1] What is called religion occupies a principal place among the causes of most human evils.[2] In England the clergy are stinging scorpions. On the Continent they are devouring dragons.[3] And there was to be no compromise with the evil thing. Simple theism without Christianity would still be a curse. In collaboration with George Grote, who was also an atheist, Bentham published a little book in which an attempt is made to show that Natural Religion is totally useless, and even mischievous, to society. James Mill did not go quite so far. He was not, like his friends, a dogmatic atheist, but what is now called an agnostic, holding that nothing can be known about the cause of the world—except, indeed, that it cannot be the work of a good and intelligent Being.

[1] Halévy, 'Le Radicalisme Philosophique,' Vol. I., p. 313. (The words are quoted in the original English.)

[2] Bentham's 'Works,' Vol. X., p. 81 (1822).

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 74 (1774–5).

For the rest, his reasons for rejecting the current religion were moral rather than metaphysical; that is, he could not reconcile it with utilitarian principles. Instead of the greatest happiness of all sensitive beings, it sets up as the standard of action the arbitrary commands of a thoroughly hateful Being—for as such he regarded a God who could call the human race into existence for the purpose of consigning the vast majority of its members to everlasting torment. It may be suggested that this was a purely accidental interpretation of Christianity, the sort of view that would naturally present itself to one who was bred a Calvinist and destined for the Presbyterian ministry. But there is no reason for supposing that his opinions would have been altered had he made its acquaintance in any of the more orthodox, or what are called Catholic, versions of the faith. For the dogma of human freewill, by which it is sought to relieve God from the responsibility for those endless sufferings which are the alleged destiny of evil-doers, was excluded by his determinist philosophy. And, even on the hypothesis of freewill, the infliction of any suffering merely as a retribution for sin would be condemned by the utilitarian ethics.

Mill was one of those whom Butler's 'Analogy' has the doubtful glory of having made complete unbelievers. It convinced him that the same arguments which have been used to destroy Christianity may be turned with equal effect against any system involving the creation of the world, as we know it, by an omnipotent and all-beneficent intelligence. This is, of course, assuming pain of any kind to be the one absolute evil, and an evil whose existence might be prevented by an exercise of absolute power. On any other theory of values the whole position of such unbelief as Mill's would have to be reconsidered.

There were, however, other than ethical objections, appealing with equal force to other minds. If Benthamism as a moral system implicitly condemned the current theology, as a logical method it was no less incompatible with the demands of faith. Neither the founder of the school nor his first followers would accept any proposition on authority, whether the seat of authority were placed in tradition or in the alleged utterance of an inward oracle. Appeals to ancient usage, to common sense, or to conscience, then generally known as the moral sense,

went for nothing in an argument with Bentham. Matters of fact had to be proved by such evidence as would be accepted in a law-court; and matters of opinion were judged by reference to logical standards no less strict than those of the mathematical sciences. As a rule, those who joined the school had already parted with all religious belief; but if they brought any with them, it was not likely to survive in such a rationalistic atmosphere as that which they were bound henceforth to breathe.

It was, however, only in private and among themselves that the Benthamites made known their hostility to all religion. Their position in reference to the popular creed differed widely from that of their French predecessors. To begin with, they may have thought that from a critical point of view the question was exhausted, that the arguments of the English deists, of Hume, and of the Encyclopaedists, were conclusive, and could not be improved. Then, again, their primary object was not the investigation of truth but the reform of society; and whatever might be the abuses of the Establishment, there was no comparison between them and the enormous evils for which the Roman Catholic Church in France had been held responsible; besides which revolutionary methods had been thoroughly discredited by the whole recent course of French history. But the strongest motive of all for strict reticence was, no doubt, the fear of offending public opinion. As has been already shown, a vast religious reaction had been in progress ever since the middle of the eighteenth century, and under the form of Evangelicalism had struck deep root both within and without the Establishment. The middle classes, rapidly rising into power and influence, were bringing their own narrow view of religion along with them. Dissent had become the ally of Liberalism, and Dissenters were even more bigoted than Churchmen. In such circumstances it seemed most politic to adopt the reticence of the Whigs without their hypocrisy; neither to attack nor to affect religion, but to ignore it.

The religious world felt and resented this eloquent silence. Utilitarianism was denounced as a godless philosophy; and godless in truth it was. An irreconcilable opposition of principles separated the utilitarian from the Evangelical point of view. When Bentham set up the happiness of all sensitive

beings as the sole end of human action, the sole standard of reference in disputed questions of right and wrong, he was bringing no new principle to light; he was but repeating in more sonorous tones the watchword of his whole century, the cry of the pulpit no less than the cry of the philosophical press. But this, as we saw, was the very method against which Wilberforce had protested as an apostasy from Gospel truth, a substitution of Paganism for Christianity. It might well be, as Paley said, that God willed the happiness of his creatures—if so, it was very good and kind of him to will it, and our guilt the greater for neglecting the service of such an amiable and excellent master—but for aught we knew, he might just as well in his inscrutable wisdom have willed the contrary; and indeed the future fate of the wicked showed clearly enough that between their happiness and his own glory there never had been a moment's hesitation. And while the religious motive was being asserted with fresh energy and significance by this illustrious convert, so also the worldly motive won an altogether new meaning from its presentation in the writings of Bentham and his school. It was no longer, as with Hume or Paley, a philosophical justification of things as they were, but a revolutionary demand for the reconstruction of things as they ought to be. Like the new pietists, the new secularists had their awakening to a sense of intolerable misery pervading the whole world; but the sin whose presence they felt and deplored was social rather than individual, a disease and corruption of the body politic, not a fall of the single soul. Nor was there any call for supernatural interference to set the disjointed framework right. What interest had perverted, interest better instructed might retrieve.

This appeal to enlightened self-interest as an instrument of social renovation brought much odium on the party; and undoubtedly in their analysis of human nature they over-estimated the importance of its selfish instincts in a way which laid their whole philosophy open to some just criticism, and much more stupid or wilful misconstruction. A new writer of transcendent genius who, discarding all theology, still retained much of the current theological animosity against Bentham, summed up Benthamism in the satirical formula: 'given a world of knaves, to evolve honesty out of their united action.'

But Plato, whose idealism was not less ardent than Carlyle's, has expressed himself like Bentham on the omnipotence of pleasure and pain as motives of action; while theologians of all shades have not been behindhand in addressing themselves to the selfish hopes and fears of mankind. In practice the utilitarians were as disinterested as their opponents; in theory they were not more mistaken.

'Philosophy,' says Schopenhauer, 'lets the gods alone, and asks in turn to be let alone by them.' Unfortunately that is what the gods will never agree to do, neglect being as fatal to their pretensions as hostility. In this instance the irrepressible conflict broke out on the educational question. I have already pointed out what a hopeful and progressive spirit prevailed in England during the early years of the nineteenth century all through the second great French war. One of the fashionable enthusiasms was elementary education. Even the old king expressed a wish, in his epigrammatic style, that the poorest of his subjects should be able to read the Bible, and have a Bible to read. The difficulty was to supply teachers enough for so enormous a demand. It was met by proposing to set the more advanced pupils to teach the less advanced what they had just learned. Both parties were expected to gain by this process; so much so, indeed, that James Mill, himself an educational expert, made it a part of the model system on which his eldest son was brought up, much to the disgust, as would seem, of the future philosopher.

The method of mutual instruction was first publicly advocated in England by Andrew Bell, a late Indian army chaplain, who had tried it with success in the orphan asylum at Madras, whence it subsequently became known as the Madras method. Bell's first pamphlet on the subject, published in 1797, fell into the hands of Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster, who had independently hit on the same device for supplying the want of trained teachers, and had thus been able to impart the rudiments of knowledge to great numbers of poor children. A friendly exchange of views between the two pioneers led to a much more extensive propaganda in favour of their joint scheme, in which Lancaster played the principal part. But if they agreed about the manner of teaching, they

differed about the matter. Both gave a foremost place to religious training; but while Bell, as a Churchman, took the Church catechism for his manual, and wished to keep education under clerical control, Lancaster advocated an unsectarian system, based on the reading of Scripture. Public opinion became interested in the quarrel, and the whole nation split into two hostile parties, the Tories siding with Bell and the Whigs with Lancaster. Southey and Coleridge spoke with particular violence on the sectarian side; the latter going so far as to substitute a most irrelevant defence of flogging, to which Lancaster objected, for a promised lecture on one of Shakespeare's plays.[1] In the face of such feuds state-action was impossible. A scheme for providing parish schools at the public expense was indeed proposed by Whitbread in 1807, and carried through the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords, much to the satisfaction of some who had voted for it in the other House. Whatever was done for popular education was due to two private associations, the one representing Bell's and the other Lancaster's point of view.

At this juncture Bentham intervened with a rather naïve proposal to solve the sectarian difficulty by eliminating theology altogether from the curriculum of instruction. With this design he planned an elaborate system of his own, described in a work called 'Chrestomathia'; and invited subscriptions towards starting an institution where it was to be put into practice; offering for his part the beautiful garden of Ford Abbey as a site for the proposed school-house. The clergy, naturally enough, felt alarmed, and brought their influence to bear on the rich patrons who had originally encouraged Bentham by promises of support, with the result of compelling him to abandon the scheme.

Whether from annoyance at this obstruction on the part of a body whom he had always hated, or as a subsidiary part of the secularising scheme itself, does not appear; but at any rate, in connexion with his educational speculations, Bentham began that series of attacks on religious belief which give him a place, though not an important place, in the history of English rationalism.

The first of these is a bulky pamphlet entitled 'Church-of-

[1] Coleridge's 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton,' p. 22 (Bohn's ed.).

Englandism and its Catechism Examined.' As a piece of abstract criticism it is an acute and powerful exposure of the Church's dogmatic teaching; and had the Catechism been then proposed for the first time as a manual for the instruction of young children, it would probably not have survived the assault. But by no principle of philosophy—not even by Coleridge's Reason—is such abstract criticism more irrevocably condemned than by utilitarianism itself, rightly understood. For, accepting the greatest happiness as our standard, the question must surely be not what is ideally true or right, but what, at a given moment, in a given state of society, is possible and expedient. The catechism was not then being first drafted; it had held the field for some centuries, and was accepted by millions as an almost infallible manual of what children should be taught to believe and to do. It might not be so good as the 'Chrestomathia'—although the most thorough-going rationalist might have his doubts on that score—but when the question practically lay between the catechism and complete ignorance, the choice for a rationalist ought not to have been doubtful.

Bentham talks, indeed, as if the Church system of religious training was altogether mischievous and demoralising; but here he falls into the fallacy, common among powerful reasoners, of proving too much. It seems absurd to suppose that so many generations of English children could have been nourished on such poison as the catechism is here made out to be without exhibiting more distinct traces of its deadly activity in their after lives. Granting that many or even most of the author's countrymen were fools and knaves, still they were not quite so bad as the incriminated document ought to have made them; and, had they been so, his expostulations would have been utterly thrown away on such a race of miscreants.

So confident, however, is the recluse of Ford Abbey in the supremacy of logic over the popular will, and in the ability of the popular will to enforce its decrees, that he concludes by declaring that the time has arrived for the euthanasia of the Church of England, that is to say for its disestablishment and disendowment, with due provision for the compensation of those who have vested interests in its offices.[1]

[1] 'Church-of-Englandism,' pp. 193 *sqq*. Bentham, by the way, betrays

In his attack on the catechism Bentham professed to uphold the cause of real Christianity against a Church which taught and practised the opposite of what its Founder had instituted. From some incidental criticisms, and from the general tone of the whole pamphlet, it might easily be gathered that his own rejection of supernatural religion was complete. Still, the bulk of his reasonings might have been adopted without impropriety by an orthodox Dissenter. In his next polemic he goes a step further. Under the title 'Not Paul but Jesus' he attempts to discredit the personal character, and with the character the doctrine of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who was also the favourite Apostle of the Evangelicals. It is not, what the title might have led us to expect, a comparative view of the two entirely different religions respectively embodied in the Epistle to the Romans and in the Sermon on the Mount, but rather a historical investigation of the true relation subsisting between Paul and the original disciples of Jesus. The result is to exhibit the converted persecutor of the Church as an ambitious and worldly-minded intriguer, who joined the infant community in order to use its resources for the attainment of his own selfish ends. Even in Bentham's youth such an interpretation would have been entirely out of date. Appearing in 1822, it only becomes intelligible when read in the light of his personal circumstances, his absolute isolation from the intellectual currents of the age, his entire ignorance of history, and the low view of human nature generated by the habit of relying on motives of pecuniary interest. Paley's argument for the veracity of the early Christians, narrow and unhistorical as it now seems, stands on an altogether higher plane as compared with this grotesque transformation of the supremely self-devoted evangelist into the likeness of a Hervey, a Talleyrand, or a Watson.

As a Biblical critic Bentham's scholarship would have disgraced one of Lancaster's pupil-teachers. St. Luke is mentioned as one of the twelve Apostles.[1] Aquila and Priscilla are 'two female disciples of Paul.'[2] Naturally the

some of his old aristocratic spirit in the hearty approval he expresses for the servile definition given in the Catechism of 'My duty to my neighbour.'

[1] 'Not Paul but Jesus,' p. 342.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 370, note.

higher criticism is unsuspected. 'Of Paul's epistles the genuineness is out of dispute.'[1] Yet even in this unaccustomed field his wonderful sagacity shows itself. For not only has the antithesis between Paul and the Jerusalem Church, of which so much is made, turned out a valuable clue to the solution of problems involved in the early history of Christianity, but in one instance he has even detected the artificial parallelism between the legends of Peter and Paul,[2] which it is one of the most unquestionable merits of the Tübingen School to have worked out in detail.

If Bentham, like the contemporaries of his youth, made the mistake of accounting for what is called revealed religion by the impostures of interested politicians, he at least kept free from their glorification of nature, and had no more respect for Natural Religion than for Natural Rights. In fact, he refused to admit any distinction between natural and revealed religion, the one being no more than a particular development and elaboration of the other; while the simplest form of supernatural belief that could be called a religion contains in germ all the mischievous delusions commonly attributed to its extreme corruption and debasement. To get rid of these evils once for all, it was therefore necessary to cut religious belief out by the roots, to show that every baneful superstition necessarily follows from the primary assumptions of God and immortality.

Such is the object of a work entitled 'The Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind,' written by Bentham in collaboration with George Grote, the future historian of Greece. It appeared in 1822, under the pseudonym of 'Philip Beauchamp,' and was never publicly acknowledged by either of the joint authors. Considered as a contribution to rationalism, the book has for us a merely subsidiary interest, its destructive criticism being applied, not to the truth, but to the utility of religious belief, and within that limit having apparently exercised little influence on public opinion. We may take it, as a set-off against the ophelistic argument for religion, the principle that what is indispensable to morality must be assumed as true. What does unmixed harm, or more harm than good, must of

[1] Table at end of volume.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

course, on the same principle, be rejected as false. And it may well have seemed that, after Hume's 'Dialogues,' no other argument for theism than the ophelistic one remained. But the method adopted is hardly suited to an age of observation and experiment. The reasoning is almost entirely deductive, and, like Bentham's attack on the catechism, has the fault of proving too much. To conceive an omnipotent ruler of the universe dispensing rewards and punishments to mankind through eternity is, we are told, to conceive an irresponsible despot having no end in view but his own glory, intent only on securing expressions of adoration and servility, accompanied by acts of abstinence from pleasure and submission to pain.[1] And this conception leads to the formation of a class set apart for the service of the divine sovereign, a class whose influence is thrown against the intellectual progress of society, and to whose interests its interests are sacrificed.

In his description of this persecuting and predatory class Bentham evidently had the Roman Catholic priesthood in view;[2] and there is a certain grim irony about the way in which the attacks of eighteenth-century deism on that belated enemy are turned against the purified residuum of faith which it had appointed to preside over the destinies of a regenerated society. And there is also a frank acceptance of the logical alternative presented to Protestants and Voltaireans by the reactionary philosophers of contemporary France, a Bonald, a Joseph de Maistre, and a Lamennais, between ultramontanism and atheism. Very well, then, atheism by all means, was the answer of the philosophical radicals.

It will be our business at a somewhat later stage of this narrative to enquire into the logical validity of the alleged alternative. Here what we have to do with is not logic but psychology, or, in more familiar language, human nature. Is it a fact that the average man feels called on to choose between Bentham and Bonald? Experience answers emphatically, No! The vast majority of human beings refuse to let themselves be imprisoned in such syllogisms, not only halting but taking up their permanent abode at one or other of the intermediate stations between the extreme positions fixed as alone tenable by theological or antitheological controversialists.

[1] 'Philip Beauchamp,' p. 33.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 122 *sqq.*

If Bentham were right, there should be no religion but Roman Catholicism, or one still more effectually organised for the suppression of freedom and happiness. And this religion ought to be no help whatever to sound morality. But the second position seems not less opposed to experience than the first. His *a priori* reasoning leaves the traditional connexion between religion and morality quite unexplained. Certainly the good conduct of a people has not always varied directly as its faith. In many instances the ratio has been inverse. But, to justify 'Philip Beauchamp's' contention, this should always have been so, which does not seem to be the fact. That right opinions should be followed by right actions and wrong opinions by wrong actions was in truth a prejudice inherited from the theology which Bentham and Grote had discarded. Their philosophy of experience had not been pushed far enough. It had not developed into the historical method.

Meanwhile secular education, assuredly a thing very much needed, both then and ever since, became the watchword of the whole utilitarian school. Apart from the abstract reference to happiness as an end, on no other point did they remain so thoroughly agreed as on this. The attitude of Roebuck is a characteristic example of such fidelity. After deserting his old political associates on nearly every other great political issue in turn, after siding with the anti-Reformers, with Austria, with the Southern slaveholders, with the French Emperor, and with the Turk, he still held out against what is called religious education in elementary schools, and gave it as his opinion that children were much better employed in trying to describe 'all the four-footed things about a farm' than in learning about 'Joram and Jehoshaphat.' The University of London, which excludes all religious knowledge as a qualification for its ordinary degrees, was created by the utilitarians in order to carry out their secularist principles; and it was to save the chair of philosophy in University College, London, from the very suspicion of theistic teaching that George Grote, who had so far forgotten his youthful liberalism as to side with the South in the American War, threw his whole influence against the election of James Martineau in 1866. Finally, John Stuart Mill, who had learned in the schools of Coleridge and Comte to take a more favourable view of religion than any

other prominent member of the party, declared that state-supported education should be limited to imparting the facts of positive science.

Bentham's contributions to religious controversy seem to have attracted little attention at the time of their publication; they were not included among his collected works; and a candid friend pronounced them to be 'of exceedingly small value.' More than fifty years elapsed before the views of another utilitarian on religion were given to the world. As advocates of practical reforms the school found it expedient not to provoke more hostility than was absolutely unavoidable. Even criticism of the Church of England was found to damage the circulation of their official organ, the 'London Review'; and it is reported never to have recovered the ground lost by incurring the suspicion of an irreligious tendency.[1]

Deliverance from superstition was destined to come, not from the open assailants, but from the professed friends and champions of the conservative cause. Something has been said already about the extraordinary complexity of English life and thought, and the curious system of oscillation, compromise, and conciliation for which it is responsible. As often as not parties borrow their leaders, and sometimes they borrow their followers from the opposite camp. Already in 1820 James Mill wrote: 'I would undertake to make Mr. Canning a convert to the principles of good government sooner than your Lord Grey and your Sir James Mackintosh';[2] and Bentham, a far inferior judge of men, fixed his hopes on Robert Peel as the coming utilitarian statesman in preference to any of his own flatterers and professed adherents, such as Brougham and O'Connell. Thus also it came about that in the dark days after Waterloo the imaginative writer who most efficaciously, if not most consciously, carried on the work of Wordsworth before his fall and of Maria Edgeworth through her life, upholding the cause of calm reason against spurious enthusiasm, senseless passion, besotted bigotry, and blinded ignorance of every description, was neither Byron nor Shelley, neither Moore nor Leigh Hunt, but Sir Walter Scott, the Tory partisan

[1] 'Life of James Mill,' p. 389.

[2] Macvey Napier's 'Correspondence,' p. 24.

the fervent loyalist, the acknowledged chief of the romantic movement in Britain. But before proceeding to exhibit those characteristics of the Waverley novels with which we are alone concerned in this connexion, it seems desirable to give some account of what was really implied by that great literary tendency which I have just named, and of which Scott's novels are generally supposed to be the most enduring result.

In a former chapter I took occasion to point out how Romanticism, in reality if not in name, was already alive, active, and patent at a time usually associated with the utmost sobriety of classical taste, that is to say, during the reign of Queen Anne; and how it was denounced as an enemy of progressive civilisation by the most popular rationalist, who was also the most accomplished Hellenist of his age. What Shaftesbury protested against was, as will be remembered, the fashionable craze for remote, extraordinary, and unaccountable things, for what either lay outside the usual course of nature, or transcended nature altogether. Now, what we mean by romanticism in literature is precisely the selection of such themes for artistic treatment. Its purposes are effected either by transporting the reader to times and places where the known conditions of our life do not apply, or by placing the objects and incidents of common experience in such an unaccustomed light that their whole significance and value are transformed into something undreamed of before. In either case the laws of nature as we know them seem to be suspended, and reason is purposely made appear incompetent to deal with the new experiences presented to the senses or to the imagination. Miracles, in short, may and do happen; while events made inaccessible to human observation by the ordinary conditions of space and time are brought within the range of vision by some inexplicable revelation. Nor is it only in acknowledged works of fiction that such phenomena are presented for our admiration. Records of supernatural intervention in past ages are sought out, republished, and recommended to belief; while expectations are confidently held out that similar displays of divine power will be repeated either immediately or in a not distant future.

Like other irrational movements, romanticism carries in itself the seeds of its own dissolution. When, in an enlightened

age, attention is drawn to remote and exceptional phenomena, the necessary consequence is that they are studied more closely and better understood. Alleged supernatural events are brought under the laws of natural causation, or it is shown that they never really happened; and it is also shown how, in the latter case, they came to be believed. Creations of a past age, such as Gothic architecture, or the feudal system, or the institution of chivalry, once regarded with unreasoning contempt, and then with unreasoning wonder, are not only studied but imitated; and the very failure to reproduce their real or imaginary excellences robs them of their fancied ideality, and shows how, having arisen in obedience to the requirements of a particular period, they have fallen out of correspondence with an altered environment. Even romantic fiction helps to exorcise the spirit of romanticism by helping the imagination to realise it as an anachronism—an office done supremely well by Cervantes in the greatest of all novels, and in a less degree by imitators of less genius since his time.

English mediaevalism under Elizabeth found an ineffectual Ariosto in Edmund Spenser. Its second revival under George III. found not only a parodist in Horace Walpole, but a real Don Quixote in the second Earl of Egmont. That eccentric genius 'presented a memorial to the king for the grant of the island of St. John, where he proposed to revive the system of feudal tenures;' and 'seems to have persuaded the council to suffer him to make the experiment.' Fortunately, 'the folly of the proposal was subsequently exposed by Conway, and Egmont was obliged to relinquish his cherished scheme.'[1] He retained, however, the right of dealing with his own property on romantic principles; and so we find him rebuilding his house at Enmere in Somerset in the guise of a feudal castle and preparing it 'to defend itself with cross-bows and arrows against the time' when 'the fabric and use of gunpowder shall be forgotten.'[2]

When, a few years later, the romantic movement first broke out in Germany and secured for a time the services of her greatest literary genius, the architecture of Strassburg Cathedral had a good deal to do with his temporary enthusiasm for the life that he

[1] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' Vol. XLIV., p. 371.
[2] Walpole's 'Memoirs of George III.,' Vol. I., p. 308.

supposed it to express. But it was not on the side of their cast-iron feudal organisation that the Middle Ages appealed to the imagination of Goethe and his young friends. What fascinated them was rather the strongly marked individualism supposed to have been favoured by mediaeval conditions, harmonising admirably with Rousseau's return to nature, and with an imperfect apprehension of the Greek classical ideal. And so Goethe took for his first hero a free-lance of the sixteenth century who flourished when feudalism was in complete decay and dissolution. Not until a generation later, during the second German romantic movement, was attention drawn to the spiritual unity of mediaeval Europe, and a longing expressed for its revival in opposition to the anarchy of the modern revolutionary epoch.[1]

Walter Scott was in some ways the literary disciple of Goethe; and, like Goethe, he took hold of the romantic movement on its individualistic and adventurous side. A true child of the eighteenth century, what appealed to him was, not the law, but the lawlessness of the Middle Ages, or rather of all ages, beginning with the exploits, celebrated in Border minstrelsy, of the ferocious brigands known as moss-troopers; among whom he was proud to find his own ancestors making a figure. Border warfare had at least the merit or the excuse of being waged against the hereditary enemies of Scotland; but his admiration was subsequently extended to the still more lawless and predatory Highlanders, who were the enemies of their own countrymen, and finally to pirates, who were the enemies of all mankind.

For the Middle Ages, properly so called, what are sometimes distinguished as the Ages of Faith, Scott never shows any particular enthusiasm. Of the novels written before the obscuration of his genius only three, the 'Betrothed,' the 'Talisman,' and 'Ivanhoe,' fall within that period. Three others, the 'Fair Maid of Perth,' 'Anne of Geierstein,' and 'Quentin Durward,' belong to pre-Reformation times. The sixteenth century is represented by three more, the 'Monastery,' the 'Abbot' and 'Kenilworth,' and the seventeenth century by five, the 'Fortunes of Nigel,' the 'Legend of Montrose,' 'Woodstock,' 'Peveril of the Peak,' and 'Old Mortality.' The remainder,

[1] This is especially the point of view taken by Novalis.

forming much the largest group and including his greatest masterpieces, occur during the eighteenth century and the dawn of the nineteenth. Such an enumeration speaks for itself. Evidently Scott had none of Carlyle's reverence for the past, nor any tendency to seek for his ideal of human society in one period more than in another. If he had a preference it was for the more civilised. He had an artist's dislike for convention and restraint, and he took his subjects from times and places in which these things interfered least with the free development of character and incident. Chivalry was an etiquette like any other, or possibly more burdensome than other etiquettes; introduced like another as an object of gentle bantering and irony, or for tragic effect, to exhibit more forcibly the passions that chafed under its restraint.

As a philosophical historian—for he really has some claim to that title—Scott shows himself the true successor of Hume and Robertson. Neither in 'Ivanhoe' nor in the 'Essay on Chivalry' is there any attempt to exhibit the Middle Ages in a roseate light. They appear as what they really were, a period of hypocrisy, licentiousness, greed, oppression, and cruelty. We are interested in them, we wish to know more about them; but the idea of remodelling modern society in their likeness is the last that would occur to any sane reader who was out of, or had even entered, his teens.

If possible, Scott is even less an apostle of ecclesiastical than of political reaction. Within the limitations of a thorough man of the world he was, so far as we can make out, sincerely religious, sympathising in his large-hearted, broadly intelligent way with all forms of devout self-surrender to the unseen, Puritan or Anglican, Catholic or Protestant, Christian, Jewish, or Moslem. But assuredly he had no love for the Roman Catholic Church[1] in particular, nor the faintest notion that the Reformation was other than an unmixed blessing for Great Britain. As an artist he is even censurable for giving religious interests so small a place in his mediaeval romances. And his preferences are clearly not for the Christians, but, in the true eighteenth-century style, for the Mohammedans and the Jews. The most attractive figure in the 'Talisman,' just as in Lessing's 'Nathan,' is Saladin; the true heroine, and indeed the only

[1] In the 'Betrothed' all his sympathies are with the legislation of Henry II.

heroic figure in 'Ivanhoe' is Rebecca. Rowena exhibits in germ the traits afterwards worked out by Thackeray in his unrivalled burlesque. When asked for pardon by De Bracey, her answer is, 'I forgive you as a Christian;' which, as Wamba observes, means that she does not forgive him at all. In 'Quentin Durward' the Bohemian and declared atheist, Hayreddin, although dismissed from the scene with a proper display of pious horror, evidently enjoys much of the author's sympathy, as he certainly does of the reader's.

Religious ministers of all denominations are the object of Scott's unsparing ridicule and contempt; the dissociation of professed piety from genuine morality being, in their instance, most characteristically exhibited. A typical case is that of the Lollard minister in the 'Fair Maid of Perth,' who wishes Catherine to become the Duke of Rothsay's mistress in order that his co-religionists may have a powerful friend at court.[1] And there is something of the same spirit in the sufficiently intelligible hint that David Deans was hoping to the last that his elder daughter would commit perjury in order to save her sister from the gallows. Jeanie's own incorruptible truthfulness is indeed ascribed to her religious education. But why, then, had not the same education produced the same effect on David Deans, and, one may add, on religious professors generally?

Supernaturalism finds no more favour with the great novelist than ecclesiasticism or pietism. It figures, of course, largely in his romances as an element of interest, and especially as local colour in his Highland scenes; but, with a single exception, the apparitions and prophecies introduced for this purpose are explained by natural causes as the result of unaided human prescience, or as the product of a heated imagination. The single exception is the 'White Lady of Avenel,' who is certainly permitted to retain her spiritual character at the expense of descending to the prosaic character of a Sunday-school teacher.

In reference to the two great schools of art about which so much was written at this period and afterwards, Scott may best

[1] Such at least is the interpretation I put on the advice given by Father Clement in chapter xiii. of the 'Fair Maid.' But I admit that it is open to a less unpleasant construction.

be described as one who worked up romantic materials into classic forms, and who used romantic motives for classical ends, for the development of purely humanist and naturalist ideas. Although no Hellenist in scholarship, he has the insatiable curiosity of a Greek, the Greek reverence for law, understood as measure and restraint. His poetry has been compared to Homer's, and with justice, although his border-blood carried in it a fiercer battle-joy than any confessed by a soul

> 'Whose master-bias leans
> To home-felt pleasures and to gentle scenes.'

But the resemblance lies most, where it has been least observed, in their common devotion to the ideals of patriotism and fame, proclaiming in clarion tones to a sensual world that an hour of glorious life is worth an undistinguished age; in their common contempt for the shrinking cowardice which dreads as the greatest of evils the abridgment of its unrecorded days; in their common conviction that no life is worth any great effort to keep it. But indeed Scott's outlook on existence is summed up in words even more sweeping as a condemnation of its value than those which on a like occasion the son of Thetis said. Achilles consoles Lycaon for death by reminding him of the far nobler and better ones, himself among the number, who are sentenced to the same doom. Helen Macgregor, Rob Roy's wife, tells *her* victim with a sublimer contempt and a still more terrible irony that she 'would have bid him live if life had been to him the same weary and wasting burden that it is to her, that it is to every noble and generous mind.'

Standing at the opposite pole of politics and popularity, Sir Walter Scott agrees with his stern countryman and contemporary, James Mill, that life is a poor thing at the best—adding that it is poorest for the best.

Such sentiments are widely removed from Evangelicalism, and even from any sincere form of Christianity; and we are now in a position to understand how George Eliot, 'when asked in later life what influence had unsettled her orthodoxy,' could reply, 'Walter Scott's.'[1] And we can also see with how little relevancy Newman could quote the great poet in the North

[1] Leslie Stephen's 'George Eliot,' p. 27.

as 'contributing by his work in prose and verse to prepare men for some closer, more practical approximation to Catholic truth.'[1]

Among Scott's poetical contemporaries there is only one whose subjects and methods can be brought into line with his religious and political opinions. Southey, belonging in all ways to the romantic school, very soon crossed over from the revolutionary and freethinking to the Tory and High Church side. Wordsworth, who eventually took up the same position, produced all his best work during the pantheistic and radical period of his career; but at no time can he be identified with either the classical or the romantic tendency. Coleridge, a romanticist, and latterly a Tory, was, as we have seen, a liberal in theology; and even more a liberal than he could afford to acknowledge openly. Moore, whose theological opinions counted for nothing, combined romantic literature with Whig politics. In Byron classic and romantic elements were so blended as to form an amalgam in which their respective shares are hard to distinguish. Shelley combines with a purely rational intellect and convictions to match a taste so comprehensive as to rise above all critical distinctions, and to admit with equal facility the claims of beauty under every possible presentation. In his poetry coldly abstract conceptions and bloodless allegories, more akin to the spirit of the later eighteenth century than to the spirit of the nineteenth, are set forth with a glittering fancy and a musical enthusiasm which wins forgiveness for their hollowness and frigidity. Here we have a spurious classical content treated with genuinely romantic inspiration. In the creations of Keats alone are the two tendencies combined with the most consummate art and the most magical effect. The 'Endymion' presents what one may call the new classicised romanticism on its more amorous, sentimental, and pastoral side; the 'Hyperion' on its more adventurous and elevated side, with a wealth of colossal figures moving amid reminiscences or promises of extraordinary events, and gleaming through illimitable perspectives of space and time; but all freed from every trace of Asiatic violence and Scandinavian indistinctness,

[1] Cardinal Newman's 'Essays,' Vol. I., p. 268.

outlined with the unmistakable clarity and sanity of Hellenic thought.

This convergence of the classic and romantic movements, so characteristic of the whole revolutionary period, brought about in politics the liberation of Greece. Napoleon's career of conquest and reorganisation proceeded in avowed imitation of Roman imperialism; the uprising of the peoples against him linked itself avowedly with mediaeval and Christian traditions; but the enthusiasm of Europe for Greece, and of the Greeks for liberty, reproduced in equal proportions the ideas of the Athenian Demos and of the Templars, of Leonidas and of St. Louis, of Simonides and of Rudel. Still, the whole gain was for the modern spirit, for the Liberal cause all the world over, first in politics, and then through politics in philosophy, for the predominance of reason over authority and tradition.[1]

Apart from all these general tendencies, not easy to circumscribe or analyse, a more direct and immediate victory over traditional credulity was won by the application of romantic studies to classic literature and history, beginning with the enquiries of Wolf and Niebuhr into the composition of the Homeric poems and the sources of early Roman history. It was no new thing to deny the single-handed authorship of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' still less to cast doubt on the stories related by Livy and Dionysius. Already in 1730 the great Italian philosopher Vico had convinced himself that the Homeric epics were the product of no one poetical genius but of a whole people, using what we call poetical phrases as their natural language. Already in 1738 Beaufort, a free-thinking French exile, had shown by a searching examination of the sources that the history of Rome before the burning of the city by the Gauls has no sure documentary foundation, and that, apart from a few general facts, it remains quite uncertain. But Vico's great work found no readers outside Italy—one might almost say outside Naples—for a century; and Beaufort, whatever effect he may have had on scholars, exercised no appreciable influence on the public opinion of his own or after times. The theories of Wolf and Niebuhr, on the other hand,

[1] This is well brought out by George Brandes in his great work on the chief currents of modern European thought.

were at once taken up by their contemporaries, eagerly canvassed, accepted by many, and made the basis of researches which have continued down to the present day. We have to ask for an explanation of this remarkable phenomenon.

It seems to me that the success of the two German scholars was due, not merely to their vast learning, but also, and even more, to their connexion with the romantic movement of the age. For of that movement interest in ballad poetry had all along been a prime factor. It began, one may say, with Addison's account of the ballad of Chevy Chase in the 'Spectator.' It received a powerful impetus from the publication of Percy's 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.' And it culminated in the modern ballads of Goethe, Bürger, and Schiller in Germany, Scott, Coleridge, and Southey in Britain, Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset in France, together with the many spirited translations of old ballads into the chief languages of modern Europe. Thus when Wolf said that the Homeric epics were really collections of short lays which had long circulated from mouth to mouth without the help of writing, and were first reduced to order under Peisistratus; or when Niebuhr said that the heroic tales preserved in Livy were simply prose versions of similar lays originally recited before the popular audiences, or by the firesides of old Rome, their surmises fell in with an order of ideas familiar to the whole reading public of the early nineteenth century.

Of the two, Wolf, who had really opened a much more fertile field of speculation, had much less success than his younger contemporary, the Roman historian. His theory, as originally proposed, was met by the insuperable difficulty, that the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' as we have them, are no fortuitous concourse of independent lays, but artistic wholes composed of mutually related parts. This difficulty has since been removed by a different method of analysis, in full accordance with the doctrine of evolution, but at that time not dreamed of by any critic. The Homeric epics are now conceived as having been constructed by a process of gradual enlargement from a primitive nucleus, which may or may not be regarded as a ballad, which may or may not have been committed to writing by its first author, but the evidence for whose distinctness from later accretions has nothing to do with theories about ballad

poetry or about the time when writing was first generally practised in Greece. Such as it was, however, Wolf's view won the adhesion of Coleridge, who, indeed, declared that he had come to the same conclusions at the suggestion of Vico without having read a word of the 'Prolegomena'; and of Macaulay, who asserted in his confident way that the Homeric poems were beyond doubt generically ballads.

Wolf's argument that writing was not used for literary purposes until a comparatively late period by the Greeks, and that such long compositions as the Homeric epics could not have been constructed without its aid, was obviously applicable to other ancient books of a more sacred character; and the bold critic did not hesitate to apply it to the Hebrew Scriptures in particular. 'Among the Hebrews,' he tells us, 'the art of written composition is not a little more modern than is commonly supposed, and the authenticity of their books, particularly of their more ancient books, is therefore questionable. But this is a subject that I leave to Oriental scholars.'[1] The same thought may have suggested itself to some of his English followers, preparing the way for later developments of Biblical criticism, which, like Homeric criticism, has become quite independent of the doubtful considerations to which it first owed a favourable hearing.

Niebuhr's speculations, as I have said, won a wider acceptance, at least in England, than Wolf's. The theory of an extensive ballad literature, orally transmitted from generation to generation among the early Romans, and converted into prose history by their first annalists, suited our romanticist ideas to perfection, and was endorsed by such scholars as Bishop Thirlwall, Professor Malden, and Dr. Arnold. Above all, it was brilliantly expounded and imaginatively illustrated by the most plausible and self-confident reasoner of the age. Not only did Macaulay reproduce Niebuhr's arguments in a style differing as much from Niebuhr's as light from darkness, but he also performed the marvellous feat of turning back certain episodes of Roman history into something like what he supposed their original ballad-form to have been, with the result of making them much more familiar to the English people than ever were the events related in their own metrical chronicles.

[1] 'Prolegomena,' p. 95.

Among the millions who have learned Macaulay's Lays by heart, perhaps not as many thousands have read the prefaces explaining their purpose, or have perceived that they are conditioned by an absolute disbelief in the exploits narrated,—are even intended to justify such disbelief by showing how fiction can come to be mistaken for truth. Yet it is certain that Macaulay not only shared Niebuhr's scepticism, but went beyond it, when he described Livy's whole first decade as scarcely entitled to more credit than our Chronicle of British Kings who reigned before the Roman invasion. It seems paradoxical that romanticism, of all philosophies, should become a school of historical negation. But a moment's consideration will show how easy was the transition from one to the other. To be constantly studying old ballads, and constantly comparing them with authentic historical records, was the surest way to arrive at the conviction of their worthlessness as evidence of what had actually happened. To trace their influence on the old chroniclers was to discover how history had come to be corrupted at the fountain-head. To compose new ballads, or indeed romantic fiction of any kind, for the public taste of the time was to gain a clear understanding of the mechanism by which fable is presented under the garb of fact.

The ballad-theory of early Roman history left in Macaulay's mind 'not the slightest doubt of its truth.'[1] There has long been among scholars not the slightest doubt of its fallacy. In Germany it had never gained general acceptance, and had been attacked even by one of the great romantic critics, A. W. Schlegel; eleven years after the publication of Macaulay's Lays, the arguments against it were summed up with overwhelming force by Schwegler; and two years later it was finally disposed of, together with some more of Niebuhr's delusions, in Cornewall Lewis's epoch-making 'Inquiry.' But the work of demolition carried on under its shelter had been accomplished, and the scaffolding might now be safely removed. Such is the constitution of public opinion that it will not accept negative criticism unless the negations are presented along with a certain amount of provisional reconstruction, which may or may not be lasting, but which, at any rate, has the priceless

[1] Macvey Napier's 'Correspondence,' p. 395.

advantage of giving the 'will to believe' something to grasp and lean on for support. Niebuhr did what Beaufort had failed to do—he ruined the authority of early Roman history, just because he put something in place of Livy's stories, and, above all, because he explained how those stories had come to be believed. The explanation, indeed, really explained nothing; for we know, without being told, that what is false must somehow, at some time, and by some one, have been invented; and however widely the responsibility may be distributed, we are ultimately confronted by the fact, made sufficiently familiar by daily experience, that some people tell stories, and that other people repeat them, without enquiring too curiously into their truth.

This disinclination on the part of public opinion to accept undiluted negation from its instructors is, curiously enough, accompanied and rectified by an instinctive faculty for seizing on the negative element, which is alone digested and assimilated, to the exclusion of the positive theories which served as a vehicle for its deglutition. Thus it came to pass that Niebuhr, the most arbitrary and dogmatic of mankind, the most respectful of received beliefs, and the most unwilling to shake the faith of the multitude, was fated to stand for the very type of historical scepticism, and to exercise what would have seemed to him a most pernicious influence in weakening the belief of educated Englishmen in the historical foundations of their religion. It had not escaped so great an intellect that his critical method was capable of being extended to Scripture history and literature. A fresh study of the Old Testament, undertaken during his residence in Rome, soon revealed the difference of authorship in one and the same Biblical book, the dates when each portion was composed, and 'the totally mistaken views prevailing with regard to the history of Hebrew literature.'[1] His researches were not continued, among other reasons, because they would give pain to some whom he did not wish to offend, and because, what was worse, they would please others of a very different stamp.

Still, a certain divergence from Genesis did betray itself in Niebuhr's Roman history, drawing down on the illustrious scholar what one of his English translators, the future Bishop

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 111 (English translation).

Thirlwall, called 'a stupid and bestial attack'[1] in the 'Quarterly Review.' In Germany most persons were at a loss to conceive on what grounds Niebuhr could be assailed in England as irreligious. But this was only because Biblical infallibility, and one may even say Biblical inspiration, had long ceased to be accepted as religious dogmas in Germany, while in England they were popularly held to be the indispensable basis of all religion. And we may reasonably suppose that the Quarterly Reviewer's wrath was due much more to the evident suggestiveness of Niebuhr's method than to any casual incursion of the Roman historian into the field of Biblical archaeology. A peep into his private correspondence would, as we know, have fully confirmed the alarm thus excited.

German influence, always a powerful factor in English religion, was not limited to the example of revolutionary methods applied to the criticism of Homer and Livy. It had acted on Coleridge by the direct communication of the results reached by liberal professors of theology in German universities. Very early in the century it had begun to act on the clergy through Bishop Marsh's translation of Michaelis, and through Marsh's own dissertation on the origin of the Synoptic Gospels annexed thereto.[2] And now the whole

[1] Thirlwall's 'Letters, Literary and Theological,' pp. 101–2. 'Bestial' is rather strong. What the Quarterly Reviewer said was that Niebuhr was the author of 'some of the most offensive paragraphs which have appeared since the Philosophical Dictionary;' and deserved to be called 'a pert, dull scoffer' ('Quarterly Review,' No. lxxvii., p. 9. 1829). Four years earlier a writer in the same Review had recommended 'any who are tempted to tax Niebuhr with deism or infidelity because he does not believe the descent of all mankind from two first parents,' to study a passage in Johnson's 'Life of Sir Thomas Browne,' where there is a caution against the disposition rashly 'to enlarge the catalogue of infidels' ('Quarterly Review,' No. lxiii., p. 86. 1825). The cause of this remarkable change of front will be given in the next chapter.

[2] Marsh supposes that the Gospels arose by a process of transcription and compilation from written sources, going back to communications made by the Apostles. And he reconciles this with the doctrine of inspiration by assuming that each Evangelist was supernaturally protected from error by the action of the Holy Spirit ('Dissertation on the Origin and Composition of the Three First (*sic*) Canonical Gospels.' Cambridge, 1801. Page 210). Randolph, Bishop of Oxford, justly regards this hypothesis as destructive of inspiration, and insists on treating all four Gospels as original sources in the strictest sense. He has even the hardihood to deny that St. Luke acknowledges his

subject was revived by a greater than Marsh. Before translating Niebuhr, Thirlwall had translated Schleiermacher's 'Introduction to the Gospel of St. Luke,' prefixing to it a long preface on the Synoptic problem, which, for the purely scientific spirit displayed in discussing questions of Biblical authority, could hardly be surpassed at the present day.

We have seen that Schleiermacher accepted the extreme results of rationalism in the sense of rejecting all supernatural belief, and only preserved religion by reducing it to a form of emotion. Such a view, of course, excludes the possibility of miracles; and under the treatment of one who, like this theologian, was largely influenced by romanticism, it explains them as parable or poetry. Thirlwall was not committed to any close agreement with the critic whom he translated; before accepting the See of St. David's he was able to assure Lord Melbourne of his own orthodoxy, nor have we any right to question his sincerity. As a layman, however—for the translation was published before his ordination—he agreed with Schleiermacher in holding that the books of the New Testament Canon are amenable to the same rules of historical criticism as any other historical compositions. More particularly the translator's own Preface, and the Essay which it introduces, go to prove that the Synoptic Gospels were compiled out of pre-existing documents.

Thirlwall admits that on any hypothesis such a view is 'irreconcilable with that doctrine of inspiration once universally prevalent in the Christian Church, according to which the sacred writers were merely passive organs or instruments of the Holy Spirit;' adding, however, that 'this doctrine has been so long abandoned that it would now be a waste of time to attack it.'[1] Only the learned, however, have abandoned it, for 'undoubtedly it is still a generally received notion.' Moreover, 'the inspiration of Scripture is a necessary and fundamental tenet on which the Church of England absolutely insists,' while allowing 'her members full liberty of private judgment as to the nature and mode of that inspiration.' Our critic, for his part, seems to think that the inspiration of the Evangelists left

indebtedness to earlier writers ('Remarks on Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament.' London, 1802. Page 27).

[1] *Op. cit.*, Introduction, p. xi.

them just as dependent on the ordinary sources of information as any other writers, and just as liable to make mistakes about matters of fact.[1] He even seems to agree with Schleiermacher that the accounts of the Nativity in the first and third Gospels are irreconcilable, and that both contain fabulous elements.[2]

An inspiration burdened with such liabilities can have little, if any, authority or value for religious belief. Thirlwall himself takes refuge in the exceedingly vague statement that 'we must seek the operation of the Spirit not in any temporary, physical, or even intellectual changes wrought in its subjects, but in the continual presence and action of what is most vital and essential in Christianity itself.' Only the opinions of private judges are not likely to agree better about 'what is most vital and essential to Christianity,' than about the nature and mode of inspiration.

The future Bishop of St. David's does not seem to have suffered as regards popularity or preferment by his temporary connexion with German rationalism. Far different was the fate of his successor in the same field, Henry Hart Milman, whose 'History of the Jews' appeared in 1829, at the close of the year. This work immediately raised a storm of disapproval, and its author was 'denounced from University and other pulpits . . . as a most dangerous and pernicious writer.'[3] The scandal is popularly ascribed to his having called Abraham 'a Sheik.' As Dr. Newman objected to the phrase, we must suppose that it conveyed some mysterious suggestion of infidelity; although one fails to see how it involves a more fatal assimilation of sacred to profane history than is implied, for instance, in calling David a king. Still, had the book contained no more daring innovation, it would probably have been allowed to circulate quietly among the children of serious persons, with other volumes of the 'Family Library.' But in fact there was a great deal more. Dean Stanley is, no doubt, wildly mistaken when he describes Milman's little volumes as 'the first decisive inroad of German theology into England;'[4]

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. xv. [2] *Op. cit.*, Notes, pp. 315–17.
[3] 'Life of Milman,' pp. 85–6.
[4] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' *sub. nom.*

and another writer still more so, who talks of it as 'sifting and classifying documentary evidence and evading or minimising the miraculous.'[1] Marsh's and Thirlwall's translations of Michaelis and Schleiermacher appeared earlier, and certainly may be described by those who love sensational language as 'inroads of German theology;' and Coleridge's 'Church and State' may, without any great inaccuracy, be similarly qualified. But in his first edition, with which alone we are concerned, Milman makes no use whatever of German criticism, ignores documentary evidence, and relates the most astounding miracles as if they were well-attested historical occurrences. But there are some indications of incipient scepticism, which perhaps would not escape the notice of an intelligent child. The appearance of God in the burning bush is mentioned only as having been related by Moses on his return to Egypt, not as a real event; and the story of Balaam's ass is similarly treated.[2] The number of the Israelites who fled from Egypt is left uncertain, owing to the possibility of an error in the received text.[3] Joshua's command to the sun and moon to stand still is regarded as possibly a misunderstanding of an old ballad in which those luminaries are invited, by a bold image, to stop for the purpose of witnessing Jehovah's triumph over his enemies. And, what perhaps gave most offence to contemporary religionists, we are cautioned against supposing that the actions of Ehud and his successors in the Book of Judges were performed at the instigation or with the approval of the Almighty. The phrase that they were raised up by God merely means that they were animated by an ardent spirit of patriotism and piety.[4]

This was quite enough without any 'sifting of documentary evidence' or the like. When we consider with what violence the religious reaction was then raging in England, it becomes quite intelligible that such views of the Old Testament history

[1] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' *sub. nom.*

[2] Vol. I., p. 152.

[3] 'Some general error runs through the whole numbering of the Israelites in the desert' (p. 57). 'It is by no means easy to reconcile the enormous numbers contained in the census with the language of other passages in the Scriptures' (p. 140).

[4] P. 192, *note*. This passage and that relating to the census are omitted from a piratical reprint of Milman, issued by Murray, Sutherland, & Co., in 1876.

could not be allowed to circulate in families where the whole Bible was systematically presented as the work, not of man, but of God. Nor was this all. From the very nature of the case every heterodox expression in the mouth of a clergyman is liable to be taken, and is justly taken, at an estimate very much higher than its face-value. If he swerves ever so little to the right or left of the Anglican Via Media towards Rome on the one hand, or towards Berlin on the other, it is naturally assumed that he would go very much further but for the restrictions entailed by his profession. Naturally, also, the most inquisitorial scrutiny into the possible consequences to be expected from seemingly harmless aberrations is exercised on one another by members of opposite parties within the ministry itself. In the next decade Newman had cause to complain of the jealousy with which his movements were watched, and, as he thought, misinterpreted. But Newman himself had set the example by helping to swell the cry of alarm at every fresh symptom of liberalism in theology. When at Rome he met an appeal to Arnold's opinion on the Christian interpretation of a certain passage in Scripture by asking, 'but is *he* a Christian?'[1] and afterwards explained himself by referring to 'some free views of Arnold about the Old Testament.' And in just the same spirit he chose to consider Milman's 'History of Christianity' as the earnest of a possible great coming battle between Rationalism and Christianity.

Newman's imputation on Arnold's faith was of course wholly undeserved; the headmaster of Rugby being in his own way a not less fervent believer than the High Church leader himself. But the most extreme suspicions of Milman's orthodoxy seem to have been, after all, fully justified. His 'History of Latin Christianity' breathes throughout a spirit of contempt for dogmatic controversies scarcely, if at all, exceeded by Harnack's more outspoken expressions of opinion; so much so, indeed, that in the judgment of Fenton Hort, a sufficiently impartial judge, all theology, and even all truth, seemed to its author a chimera.[2] In the circumstances it was hardly to be expected that Milman should receive high ecclesiastical promotion. The wonder would rather be that he rose to be Dean

[1] 'Apologia,' p. 34.

[2] 'Life of Hort,' Vol. I., p. 394.

of St. Paul's, if deaneries had not become the consecrated preferment of eminent latitudinarian divines.

The name of Arnold has already occurred in connexion with the historical theories of Niebuhr, and with the romanticism to which Niebuhr half unconsciously gave a rationalistic direction. It will occur again in the next chapter in connexion with the great religious reaction in which he bore a distinguished part, while hastening its dissolution by the violence of his opposition to the more thorough-going section of its leaders. Here we have merely to specify those concessions of his to rationalism which Newman thought so dangerous that Arnold's elevation to the episcopal bench, had it actually occurred, as it seems to have been contemplated, would have hastened his own secession from the Anglican community. To Arnold himself these concessions did not seem to be of any importance, any more than did the similar views entertained by Niebuhr to the great historian himself. So far as I am aware, they found little or no expression in his published writings, and have only come to light through private letters and reports of conversations. John Henry Newman's younger brother, Francis, tells us that Dr. Arnold looked on the historical truth of the account of the Creation and the Fall in Genesis as a matter of indifference; Noah's deluge was evidently mythical, and the history of Joseph 'a beautiful poem.'[1] We learn from one of his letters that he disbelieved in the authenticity of Daniel,[2] for those times a very serious step, and one which cost Coleridge some struggles to make, or to avow. In New Testament criticism, Francis Newman is again our authority for Arnold's opinion that the great similarity of the Synoptic Gospels marks them as having flowed from very similar sources, and that the First Gospel has 'no pretensions to be regarded as the actual writing of Matthew.'[3] The Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, he regarded as evidently the work of an eye-witness, and as such, 'an impregnable fortress of Christianity.'[4]

Such views bear a close resemblance to those held at a much earlier period by Coleridge, whose 'Confessions of an

[1] F. W. Newman's 'Phases of Faith,' p. 68.
[2] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. II., p. 164.
[3] 'Phases,' p. 81.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

Inquiring Spirit' were read by Arnold with interest and sympathy on their first publication,[1] and, like his, had their source in German teaching, whose effect, as we have seen, was reinforced by the parallel process of disintegration applied to Homeric poetry and Roman history by Wolf and Niebuhr—an influence fully appreciated by Arnold himself.[2] How far his pupils suspected these rationalistic leanings, or were affected by them, is not clear. But it is certain that the most distinguished among their number altogether abandoned belief in dogmatic theology. In this respect the attitude of his son Matthew is too notorious to need more than a reference, until we come to deal with it hereafter as a part of subsequent history. Arthur Stanley is known to have held the same opinions as Matthew Arnold,[3] while occupying the position of a great Anglican dignitary. Arthur Hugh Clough became in early life a complete sceptic. Richard Congreve founded a branch of the Positivist Church in London. But all four retained from their early training under Dr. Arnold not only a high moral enthusiasm, but also a passionate love for religion as such, which with them, as with others, has so complicated and disguised the course of English rationalism that before proceeding any further some account must be given of the movement whence it was derived.

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 111.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 338.
[3] The authority for this statement will be given hereafter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RELIGIOUS REACTION AND ITS MEANING

WRITING to a German friend towards the close of 1831, Connop Thirlwall characterises the state of religious feeling in England by the bitter remark that 'any man who doubts the certainty of the Messiah's appearance on earth being now near at hand is denounced by, I am afraid I may say, a majority of the persons who claim the epithet religious by way of eminence as a downright infidel.[1] This excited state of public opinion explains the brutal attack on Niebuhr in the 'Quarterly Review,' and the outcry against Milman which led to the discontinuance of the series in which his 'History of the Jews' first appeared. But the millenarian fanaticism to which the illustrious Hellenist refers with such contempt was only one symptom among others of a far vaster religious movement, to whose spell he, with other intellects of equal distinction, had succumbed.

This movement, as has been shown in a former chapter, embraced all Western Europe, and was intimately connected with the rise of the uneducated masses into prominence, influence, and power. Since its beginning the democratic cause had suffered a temporary check by the defeat of its French representatives, and by the repressive system practised after Waterloo. But the spiritual form of democracy had lost nothing; it had even gained by the political reaction. For the royalist and aristocratic party were persuaded that the downfall of the old *régime* had been brought about exclusively by the spread of religious unbelief, and that no surer safeguard against the recurrence of such a catastrophe could be devised than the sedulous propagation of religious beliefs and practices among

[1] 'Letters, Literary and Theological,' pp. 101–2.

all classes, but more particularly among the most ignorant. In France before the Revolution high intellect among the titled classes had generally been associated with freethought; it now shared in the plebeian revolt against reason. The three original leaders of the Catholic revival, Bonald, Chateaubriand, and Joseph de Maistre, were all of noble birth; and their younger ally, Lamennais, had some claim to that distinction. On the Continent romanticism was peculiarly associated with Catholicism; and, although connected with reminiscences of feudalism, it was nourished on popular poetry and superstition. And everywhere among all classes the return of peace set free a mass of nervous energy which, in the absence of other sources of excitement, threw itself with avidity on the hopes and fears of a supernatural world.

In England the current gained an additional reinforcement from its confluence with the pietistic movement started three generations before by William Law, the Wesleys, and Whitfield. Although purely native in its commencements, that movement received its first decisive impulse and true organising power from the contagion of German pietism, carried across the sea by Moravian missionaries; just as the English Reformation, though claiming descent from Wyclif, would have perished but for the advent of Luther. By Wesley's time, however, the teaching of Spener and Franke had spent its force in the parent country, and was being succeeded by rationalism; while in England the normal course of development was inverted, the deistic movement being succeeded by Methodism without the Church and by Evangelicalism within it.

The Evangelicals had for a long time little claim to intellectual or social distinction; and in politics they generally found themselves on the reactionary side.[1] But the adhesion of Wilberforce opened the great world to their influence, and to some extent linked them with the cause of freedom by enlisting them in the attack on the slave-trade and slavery. Meanwhile their traditional connexion with Cambridge brought their theological studies into touch with the mathematical sciences. Finally, the suspicion of Methodism, which had long alienated from them the sympathies of the conservative as well as of the cultivated classes, gave way before the steady grasp of Church

[1] Cowper was a good Whig; but he is an exception.

principles, maintained through half a century's ministry by their leader, Charles Simeon.[1]

But the Evangelical party, strong as it grew in weight and numbers, did more by example than by doctrine. Evangelical influence was shown less by making converts to Calvinism than by exciting religious feeling, or at least a lively interest in religion, throughout the country. And the process of attraction worked with more energy because it fell in with the new trend of public opinion, due to the after effects of the great war; the longing for social reform, accompanied by a dread that reform without religion might take the shape of a devastating revolution; the sense of a supernatural presence in the wonderful events of which Europe had lately been the scene; the craving for a new source of excitement now that those events were ended.

Swelled by these currents, the tide of religious feeling rose until it submerged some of the loftiest intellectual summits. Henry Hallam, who flourished at this time, has, alone, I believe, among British lay historians, left a reputation for deep and genuine Christian piety. Sir Humphry Davy, always personally religious, now became a reactionary obscurantist;[2] Wordsworth, whatever his inner convictions may have been, professed himself a High Churchman.[3] Southey was a High Churchman by profession and conviction alike. As to the greatest of English intellects, Coleridge, I have endeavoured to show that in spite of some seeming disclaimers, he remained to the last a Germanised Alexandrian pantheist. But it is important to note that, like his contemporary, Schleiermacher, he combined this philosophical creed with a warm and even passionate religious feeling of the Evangelical type. Traces of the same influence may be detected in a quarter where they would least have been expected. High as was the peak on which Shelley stood, broad-based as were his speculative beliefs, some spray from those surging waters must have dashed across his feet, if it be true that once when expatiating on the good a

[1] Compare the character of Tryon in 'Janet's Repentance' ('Scenes of Clerical Life,' by George Eliot).

[2] So Coleridge told Crabb Robinson ('Diary,' Vol II., p. 273).

[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 210.

good clergyman might do, he confessed a strong inclination to enter the Church.[1]

What had flashed for a moment before the imagination of England's supreme idealist was put into practice by several among the most gifted of his younger contemporaries. Never since the Middle Ages has such an array of genius, talent, learning, and self-devotion enlisted itself in the service of the English Church as during the quarter century which followed the great war. Among those who entered her ministry from 1814 to 1839 I find—placing them in chronological order—the names of Blanco White, John Keble, Whately, Peacock the mathematician, Adam Sedgwick, Milman, Thomas Arnold, Baden Powell, Whewell, J. H. Newman, Julius Hare, Thirlwall, Hurrell Froude, Samuel Wilberforce, Charles Merivale, John Sterling, F. D. Maurice, W. G. Ward, Arthur Stanley, and R. W. Church. The list, it will be seen, represents abilities and accomplishments of every kind, poetical, literary, philosophical, scientific, historical, and oratorical. In some instances the possessors of these shining gifts were drawn away from other professions to the service of the Church, an attraction exemplified by the cases of Hare and Thirlwall in 1827 and 1828, Merivale, Maurice, and Sterling in 1833 and 1834, dates which seem to mark epochs of peculiar intensity in religious feeling.

It has also to be observed that in searching for an index to the energy of religious feeling we need not limit ourselves to the clergy of the establishment. James Martineau, originally destined for a lay career, experienced a vocation in 1822, and was ordained a Unitarian minister in 1828. The three great poets who made their *début* during the latter part of this period, Elizabeth Barrett, Alfred Tennyson, and Robert Browning, were all deeply religious writers; the greatest statesman who grew to manhood in those years, William Ewart Gladstone, is no less famous for his piety than for his oratory; and Lord Shaftesbury, afterwards the recognised leader of the Evangelical party, but now more famous as the author of our Factory Acts, entered Parliament in 1826.

All great religious movements are determined by two main

[1] Dowden's 'Life of Shelley,' Vol. I., p. 513. The story is told on Peacock's authority.

factors, which in practice unite in one current or converge to work out a single result. There is the tendency to return to a primitive state of fancied purity and simplicity of manners. And going hand in hand with this, there is the tendency to react against the worldliness, the indifference, the corruption of modern times, of the state which has succeeded to the lost felicity of mankind. We talk about the Protestant Reformation; but in reality all reformations are protests, in the sense of denouncing what exists, as a prelude to the return or restoration of what it has unlawfully superseded. With early Christianity the protest was against pharisaism and heathenism; the ideal was a return to the carelessness and innocence of Eden. Then, as the Church herself became secularised, one attempt after another was made, in the Thebais, at Cluny, or at Assisi, to reconstruct the lost conditions of Galilee and Jerusalem;—each practically a failure, each a far-shining example of idealism to future generations. For all these protests alike are animated by the illusion that a society can be built up and maintained without the strife and the sorrow, the doom of mingled motives and imperfect achievement, which make human life what it is and must be. That other and higher life may be projected into a supernatural world, only attainable through death, and then only by the initiated, who, as Pindar says, know the end of this life and its God-given beginning. But there are always some ardent and impatient spirits who will not submit to this delay, who would hurry on the coming Kingdom by their prayers, or strive by their deeds to realise it on earth. This realisation is accomplished or attempted in various ways, by cherishing the spiritual at the expense of the material life in themselves, using the various resources of asceticism, as prayer, meditation, fasting, celibacy, abstinence from worldly pleasures, mutual edification, and the like; by carrying the tidings of redemption over the whole earth; by practising thaumaturgy; or, finally, by organising a world-wide spiritual society, armed with power to make the supposed will of God prevail. And as the process repeats itself age after age it becomes facilitated by reference to periods of similar excitement in the past, whose proceedings are taken as a model, with at best some efforts to avoid their more glaring mistakes.

Pietism is such an attempt to take religion, as people say,

in earnest; to realise the irrealisable, the transcendental, under the forms of space, time, and causality; to supersede by dreamy abstractions what has proved its title to exist by having lasted for millions of years. And the law of pietistic movements is that at first their representatives construct a picture of the primitive conditions of faith; then pray for its supernatural restoration, or predict that event as certain to occur very soon; and finally, either by direct imitation of former developments, or by unconscious submission to the same natural forces that brought these about, organise themselves into religious communities, where the impulses of religious devotion are at once satisfied, regulated, and repressed. The new religionists may form such communities for themselves, in accordance with their peculiar needs; or they may possess themselves of the old edifice by persuasion or force; or they may return to the ancient fold after a more or less protracted absence, bringing with them, however, inconvenient habits of independence and innovation; or they may remain there from the first, gradually reshaping it into conformity with their novel or resuscitated ideals. But in every case the impulse, begun in solitude, leads to the construction of a social union.

England after the peace exhibited all the various phenomena accompanying the growth and manifestation of pietism within comparatively narrow limits of space and time; their natural energy being heightened by the violent antagonism between the various religious bodies, as well as between all of them collectively and the spirit of revolutionary rationalism embodied in Bentham's school, combined with the new German criticism which some of the clergy themselves, following Coleridge's example, were beginning to accept and apply.

Above all, the old hostility between Protestants and Catholics had broken out again with unexpected violence. The Roman Catholic Church had profited to the fullest extent by the religious reaction abroad,—acquiring, moreover, a new halo of sanctity from the sufferings borne by her ministers under the Terror, and by her supreme Pontiff under the Empire. In France the Restoration had placed power in the hands of Catholic bigots to whom all religious liberty was hateful. Catholic thinkers from Bonald to Lamennais directed their

attacks quite as much against the Protestants as against the freethinkers, holding, indeed, that there was no logical resting-place between the Tridentine decrees and atheism;[1]—or for that matter, any practical halfway house either, the Revolution having sprung by a historical necessity from the theses of Luther. And this restored Catholicism presented itself under the form, at all times most odious to English Protestants, of an absolute Papal monarchy, with the claim, now put forward by Joseph de Maistre more seriously and aggressively than ever before, of infallibility for its earthly head.

Although the subject is not immediately connected with this enquiry, we may pause for a moment to point out how Ultramontanism was connected with the political history of Europe. It seems probable that memories of the Napoleonic empire had a good deal to do with the dogma of papal infallibility. For the disappearance of the colossal despot created a void which ideal aspirations now, as on former occasions, rushed in to fill up. The same phenomenon has presented itself over and over again in European history, to go no further back, suggesting by its constant repetition that the sequence amounts to a true sociological law. After the abandonment of Rome by her Caesars, Leo the Great emerges as first founder of the temporal power. After the dissolution of the Carolingian empire came the pretensions embodied in the forged decretals of Isidore. When the Saxon dynasty showed signs of enfeeblement, Hildebrand usurped its place. And, finally, the fall of the Hohenstaufens was followed in half a century by the still more extravagant claims of Boniface VIII.

But the aggressive insolence of Romish partisans was met by at least equal insolence on the other side. Here also political events were a determining factor in the new assumptions of religious belief. For the last conflicts in the long war had, to a certain extent, been Catholic defeats. The victorious powers were either schismatic or Protestant. In particular the prestige of England, alone irreconcilable, alone invincible, had risen to an extraordinary height; and her people were not inclined to abate anything of their traditional arrogance in the hour of victory. Everything combined to raise their self-esteem. The liberty which had long been their hereditary possession was just what

[1] 'Oeuvres de J. de Bonald,' Vol. II., p. 209.

all other European nations most longed to possess, and what France by her unaided efforts had failed to secure. Napoleon was but their factor, made to engross up glorious deeds on their behalf—deeds whose transfer was effected by the victory of Waterloo. The peoples of Southern Europe were either slaves or brigands, the Russians barbarians, the Germans unpractical dreamers. No doubt this superiority of the English to other nations was in the first instance an inherent racial distinction, going back to Edward III.'s time at least. But it had since been enhanced by a sedulous study of the Bible; and earth's less fortunate children might hope by means of the same discipline to acquire as much of the same virtue and prosperity as was compatible with their natural inferiority to ourselves. Societies were formed for circulating the sacred volume abroad; and sanguine hopes were entertained that Popish darkness might vanish before the light that emanated from its open pages.

It might have been suggested that the example of an adjacent island, where Protestant ascendency had long afforded the magical volume every chance of exercising its proselytising power, gave little encouragement to such confident expectations. The fact that many, if not most, of the Irish could not read would, however, offer an explanation of this strange phenomenon; education not being, so far, one of the blessings that seemed to go with English government either at home or abroad. But a new era had dawned, and it was confidently anticipated that the Irish, thanks to Bible Societies, would shortly become a happy, united, and Protestant people. Meanwhile Ireland was sending over *her* missionaries to England, as to the United States, in the shape of pauper immigrants, destined to become the nucleus of powerful Catholic communities in both countries.

The movement for Catholic emancipation, supplying as it did the leading political issue and the most fertile theme for parliamentary eloquence from the Peace onwards, still further intensified the religious passions of the country. To say, as Lord Melbourne did, that all the wise men were for emancipation and all the fools against it, amounted to saying, what was probably true, that the vast majority of English people were opposed to this great measure of expediency and justice. In what sense Melbourne wished to be understood when he added

that 'the fools were right' has not been explained. But if, as seems probable, he referred to the demoralising influence exercised by O'Connell and his followers on the House of Commons, the fools, granting them to have been right at all, were only right by accident. For their hostility was not directed against the Irish Repealers, but against the Catholics as a body whose loyalty was doubtful and as to whose superstition there was no doubt whatever.

Sectarian animosity drew fresh nutriment from the prevalent rage for the interpretation of prophecy in the light of contemporary politics, itself a standing note of pietism. The question whether Napoleon or the Pope was Antichrist supplied a subject for conversation in every English drawing-room;[1] and, assuming Christ to be identified with Anglican Protestantism, it was a question on which opinion might reasonably be divided. What gave it practical importance was that if that apocalyptic personage had appeared under the form of the French Emperor, the end of the world might be expected in the near future, whereas, on the other alternative, it would have to wait until the Papacy was abolished.

Under the combined influence of these various forces English pietism reached its highest pitch of exaltation in the years immediately preceding Catholic emancipation. For those who prefer exact numerical statements the year 1827 may be quoted as the date of its culmination. That year saw the publication of a work by a Spanish Jesuit, Lacunza, on the 'Coming of the Messiah,' in a translation made by the celebrated Edward Irving; and it also saw the publication of what is now a far more famous book, Keble's 'Christian Year.' Irving still lives in literature, but only as the friend of Carlyle and the disappointed lover of Carlyle's future wife. There was a time, however, when his fame outshone Carlyle's. If not precisely what he had hoped to be, 'the first in divinity,' at any rate he held London spellbound as the first in popular oratory, and the most fashionable prophet of that impending judgment to which so many were looking forward.[2] Without intellectual

[1] Mozley's 'Reminiscences,' Vol. I., p. 126.

[2] So late as October, 1831, we find even Dr. Arnold writing: 'All in the moral and physical world appears so exactly to announce the coming of the

distinction, without the practical good sense so often possessed by mystics, and apparently unfitted either to command or to obey, his imposing presence, his transparent honesty, his deep affectionateness, and an inexhaustible flow of words, stamped with a certain archaic dignity of style, lifted the young Scotchman to an eminence where, in the absence of those other gifts, he could not maintain himself long—least of all in that great age of Nemesis, when the most brilliant success ever betokened the swiftest and most irremediable ruin.

'If Irving had married me,' said Mrs. Carlyle, 'there would have been no voices.' Possibly not in his chapel; but the Pentecostal manifestations could hardly have failed to break out somewhere or other; for pietism in its extreme form always tends to reproduce the phenomena of primitive Christianity in more or less hysterical excess. Curiously enough, this passionate mysticism allied itself in the Regent-square preacher with very High Church principles, including an approach to sacramentarian doctrines, and with a fanatical intolerance of nonconformity to the established religion. He condemned the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and he condemned Catholic emancipation. Pietism, in fact, was feeling its way towards a more rigid ecclesiastical organisation, and, in theory at least, towards a sterner repression of schism.

Keble's 'Christian Year' appeared, as I have said, at about the same time as Irving's apocalyptic translation from the Spanish. The poems themselves had been composed at an earlier and more peaceful period; but the saintly author evidently considered that there was a certain opportuneness in publishing them just then, and that they were likely to supply a needful antidote to the morbid excitement prevalent in religious circles. His Introduction, dated May 30, 1827, refers to 'times of much leisure and unbounded curiosity, when excitement of every kind is sought after with morbid eagerness;' and it recommends the Anglican Liturgy as offering, in opposition to such cravings, a sober standard of feeling in matters of practical religion. To a modern reader taking up

"great day of the Lord," *i.e.* a period of fearful visitation to terminate the existing state of things, whether to terminate the whole existence of the human race neither man nor angel knows' (Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. I., p. 252). My attention was drawn to this passage by a reference in Mrs. Fawcett's 'Life of Sir W. Molesworth.'

the 'Christian Year' for the first time, Keble's tone seems, on the contrary, rather high-wrought, and such as none but a mystic could permanently maintain. This altered feeling will serve better than any other symptom as an exponent of the change in English temper since Thirlwall complained to Bunsen of the rabid millenarianism still rampant a few years later.

Keble, so to speak, discounts the Second Advent. He tries to repress the restless impatience of his contemporaries by showing that a very passable heaven on earth might be realised by attuning their emotions to the festivals and ceremonies of the Church; by using their imagination to revivify Scriptural scenes; but above all, by using their fancy to suffuse all nature, history, and present human experience with the light and colour of a visionary pietism. He is what one may call an open-air, spontaneous ritualist, preluding to the more conscious and artificially decorative efforts of his ecclesiastical successors. In both, however, the aesthetic element is but a cloudy substitute for the real goddess, the

> 'Juno whose great name
> Is Unio in the anagram——'

and whose name in history is the Church of Rome.

What we call the High Church, or more properly the Tractarian Movement, sometimes seems to be credited with the great religious revival of the earlier nineteenth century in England. I trust that enough has been already said to show that this view is a mistake. Pietism was already declining when the Oxford Movement began, and that movement was even a symptom of its decline. Judged by any standard except intellectual eminence, Evangelicalism was far more powerful, continuous, and fertile than its successor; bearing, indeed, much the same relation to Newman and Pusey that the Tudor Reformation bore to the ecclesiasticism of Montague and Laud. It has also to be noted that, in each instance, the later and noisier grew out of the earlier revival by a constant law of evolution, the same law by which primitive Christianity organised itself into the Catholic Church. And just as the early Christians found the lines on which they were to move forward marked out, and the process itself greatly facilitated, by the administrative hierarchy of the Roman empire and the example of the Jewish

priesthood, so also the ready-made forms of Anglicanism—themselves inherited from Rome—and the ever-present model of the living Roman Church did the work of a forcing-house, and consummated within a few years what otherwise might have needed more than a lifetime for its completion.

How intimately the Tractarian movement was related to Evangelicalism is shown in a more concrete manner by the fact that its great leader and only theologian of commanding genius, John Henry Newman, had been brought up as an Evangelical—owing his soul, as he expressed it, to Thomas Scott—and that he only worked his way out of Evangelical principles after years of anxious thought and religious experience. Indeed, as a High Churchman, he continued to hold and inculcate the leading ideas revived by Wesley and emphasised by Wilberforce as the essential elements of Christianity in opposition to the rationalist preaching of English eighteenth-century divines. We know what these are: they are the consciousness of pre-natal sin as a calamity inherited from the first man, the consequent doom of all men to everlasting torments, and the promise of salvation therefrom through the atoning death of the incarnate Son of God—with the guarantee of Biblical infallibility as the unquestionable basis of the whole creed. A few extracts from Newman's sermons will put his position beyond doubt.

'We have no standard of Truth at all but the Bible,'[1] says the Oxford preacher, and to that he appeals. It is, he seems to think, literally inspired, the Word of God throughout. And what does God tell us? That we are corrupt, and that 'our corruption is not merely in this action or in that, but in our *nature*.' So much is implied in the Jewish ceremonial law; and so much is expressly asserted in the history of the fall of Adam. People think that, although sinful, they could be good if they chose. But this is a profound mistake. Our impotence for all but evil can only be got rid of by deliberate and direct acts of faith in the Great Sacrifice which has been set forth for its removal. The sacrifice was a transfer of the infinite punishment which—according to theological ethics—'was our desert' to Christ, who bore it for us on the Cross.[2]

When the Israelites, acting under the divine command,

[1] 'Parochial and Plain Sermons,' Vol. II., p. 384.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 87–8.

were butchering whole populations, including the women and children, the weak and the infirm, it was indeed an awful office, an unutterably heart-piercing task, the thought of which fills us with the deepest pity—for the victims? no, for the executioners, who are well known to have been the most tender-hearted of mankind. But let us not forget their consolations. 'Doubtless as they slew those who suffered for the sins of their fathers their thoughts turned first to the fall of Adam, and next to that unseen state where all inequalities are righted.'[1] Perhaps their trouble was that the Canaanitish children were getting off too cheap with a comparatively painless death, while their consolation was the prospect of a more adequate retribution to be inflicted in hell. For the children, being unbaptised, and consequently unregenerate, were bound to suffer for the sin of Adam. And, apart from that sentence, they may even have had a mysterious responsibility of their own. 'Who can say in what state that infant soul is? Who can say it has not its energies of reason in some unknown sphere, quite consistently with the reality of its insensibility to the external world?'[2] Who, indeed! And who can say that the elect will not be apparently damned, quite consistently with the reality of their eternal presence in heaven?

Newman, in fact, did not so much change his theology as surround the citadel of Evangelical pietism with fresh doctrinal outworks, such as Baptismal Regeneration, the Real Presence, the necessity of supplementing faith by works, the possession of supernatural powers by the priesthood, transmitted from the Apostles by ordination, and, as a guarantee for all other doctrines, the extension of authority from the Bible to the Church. Thus he stood farther than the Evangelicals from rationalism, and his opposition to reason is more systematic than theirs. Better for the country, he thinks, 'were it vastly more superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion than at present it shows itself to be.'[3]

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 187.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 167. We may suppose that Newman continued to hold these opinions to the last, the sermons having been reprinted with his sanction, and without any contradictory footnote to the passages quoted. Besides, as will be seen hereafter, much the same views are put forward in the 'Grammar of Assent.'

[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 320.

At the same time, Newman, though fundamentally a mystic, is, as often happens with mystics, an acute dialectician, and would fain enlist reason on his side. But in trying to identify faith with reason, in reality he identifies reason with faith. To be convinced by reasoning, he urges, is nothing else than 'trusting the general soundness of our reasoning powers.'[1] And he adds that 'we trust them though they often deceive us;' being, indeed, obliged to do so by the conditions of life itself, by the necessity of action. Oddly enough, the existence of 'an Unseen Power whom we are bound to obey'[2] is counted among the very few things that come under a higher category than faith, things known to us as certainly as our own existence. Newman, of course, was well aware that there are some persons who either do not possess this immediate knowledge of God, or will not admit that they possess it. But these, according to him, are peculiar embodiments of the evil principle. Extreme wickedness rather than irrationality is the cause of their unbelief. Arnold's attitude towards atheism was much the same;[3] and we may therefore regard it as characteristic of the whole pietistic movement. But so useful a weapon of controversy as charging your opponents with gross moral turpitude admits of still wider applications; and we shall presently see how the Tractarians used it in defence of Biblical inspiration, or rather of what they understood by inspiration.

Among the original leaders of the Tractarian movement Newman alone was a convert from Evangelicalism in the strict sense; but his two chief associates were touched with the Evangelical tone, and were certainly what in Germany would have been called pietists. Keble had been brought up in High Church principles; but his 'Christian Year' so evidently bears the stamp of Wesley's school that Hurrell Froude objected to its publication on the ground that people would take the author for a Methodist.[4] A protracted residence in Germany brought Pusey into direct contact with the pietistic tradition; and he wrote in terms of warm admiration for its founder, Spener, whom he is said to have resembled closely, among other points, in his 'opposition to worldly amusements, to luxury, to dancing

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 191–2. [2] P. 193.
[3] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. I., p. 352.
[4] 'Autobiography of Isaac Williams,' p. 22.

and theatres.'[1] And we find the same puritanical leanings in the other religious leaders of the time, in Arnold, in Maurice, and in Julius Hare.

What gave the Oxford movement its most distinctive character, and what has led to its being identified in popular tradition with the whole religious reaction of which in reality it formed but a single and very limited current, was its intense, conscious, and avowed antagonism from the beginning to every variety of rationalism, combined with an equally clear recognition of the dangers to be dreaded from the action of reason on faith.[2] There could no longer be a question of reconciling the two enemies. The experiment had been tried in the eighteenth century, and had failed; or if, as some believers still fondly imagined, the objections of English deism had been quelled by such reasoners as Butler and Lardner, others of a more formidable description were springing up to take their place. Since the peace England once more lay open to Continental influences;[3] and just as French Jacobinism had been the bugbear of political reactionists a generation before, so now German neology had become the bugbear of theological reactionists who could spare any attention from the subject of prophecy and its fulfilment. German literature, long a fashionable study, and now presented to public curiosity by Carlyle with more enthusiasm and knowledge than had ever before been devoted to its propagation, was impregnated with rationalism from beginning to end. German philosophy merely rung the changes on pantheism, German theology was a dully decorous surrender to Voltaire—and not always even decorous. Young Englishmen sent to Göttingen to complete their education sometimes found their way into Eichhorn's class-room, and were promised some fine fun when the lecturer came to Balaam's ass.[4] Nor was it absolutely necessary to visit Germany to be infected with the rationalistic poison. Slack as was the trade in foreign literature, various works of German theology found their way into the hands of home-staying English students of divinity, who ran

[1] Liddon's 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 159.

[2] This is evident both from Newman's 'Apologia' and from Mozley's 'Reminiscences.'

[3] Merivale, 'Autobiography,' p. 53.

[4] 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 74.

the risk of being betrayed by their 'deceptive use of Christian phraseology into conclusions subversive of Christianity.'[1]

At that time the advantage of passing over inconvenient phenomena in silence had not yet been discovered; neither had it occurred to apologists, at least in England, to declare without evidence that the latest results of free criticism had entirely reversed its earlier negations; nor, again, was it the fashion to discredit free enquiry by emphasising the divergencies which are the unavoidable accompaniments of freedom. Thus it happened that Hugh James Rose, a Cambridge divine, who had made himself well acquainted with the literature of modern German theology, took what would now be considered the very imprudent step of laying the fruits of his wide reading before the English public in a volume entitled 'The Present State of Protestantism in Germany.' The book is one long and bitter attack on German rationalistic theology, from Semler and Michaelis to De Wette and Bretschneider. As might be expected, Rose has no sympathy with the peculiar constitution of the German mind: he is ignorant or contemptuous of the large-hearted comprehensiveness which is ever leading it towards the union of seemingly contradictory positions. The spectacle of men calling themselves Christian ministers, still performing religious ceremonies after they had renounced all the great Catholic dogmas, at least in their scholastic sense, and still professing to take their stand on the Bible when they had denied its inspiration, denied its historical accuracy, and riddled it with disintegrating criticism from Genesis to Revelation, nay more, preaching rationalised Christianity from the pulpit, and teaching it to children in the classes for religious instruction—this to him seemed something scandalous and shocking. This surely was rank Socinianism and deism, with the addition of a deeper dishonesty than the adherents of those damnable errors, with all their moral obliquity, had shown themselves capable of in England. Above all, to a Cambridge scholar, bred upon Paley's Evidences, it must have been particularly bewildering to find a total rejection of miracles combined with an unfaltering belief in the honesty of the historians who related them. Nothing could be easier than to ridicule the so-called rationalistic explanations by which Paulus in particular had laboriously

[1] Rose's 'Present State of Protestantism in Germany,' pp. xix. and 2-3.

striven to resolve all such narratives into purely natural occurrences; and a younger German critic, David Strauss, was soon to show the insufficiency of his method. Still the problem remained, and persistently called for a solution; how to reconcile the fact that miracles do not happen, and probably cannot happen, with the other fact that they are vouched for by witnesses whom we should trust for a faithful report of ordinary events. The answer that their denial arises solely from the wicked pride of the human heart could not long satisfy serious enquirers.

Another feature of German thought, most alien from the narrow Cambridge understanding of that age, with its conceptions bounded on the one side by the eternal truth of mathematics, and on the other by the eternal perfection of Greek classic literature, was the idea of evolution in religion, then known as the theory of Accommodation. This is the notion, said to have been first put forward by Semler, that 'we are not to take all the declarations of Scripture as addressed to us, but to consider them as in many points adapted to the feelings and dispositions of the age when they originated,'[1] combined with Lessing's wider view of all religious beliefs as stages in the education of the human race.

Rose was a High Churchman, and, had he belonged to Oxford, might have led the coming movement. Indeed, the grand object of his publication was to hold up German rationalism as an awful example of what happened in religious communities where clerical orthodoxy was not maintained by a rigorous system of subscription to doctrinal formulas, with a warning to his own Church by no means to relax the system already in force. It is therefore interesting to note that the plenary inspiration and infallibility of Scripture, so summarily dealt with by Thirlwall, are assumed throughout, and their rejection exhibited as a most fatal error of German Protestantism. Even to call in question the traditional authorship of a Biblical book seems to be thought foolish, or worse. As specimens of the 'attacks' of German divines on parts of both Testaments the following, among others, are given. Gesenius and others declare the Pentateuch not to be the work of Moses. Rosenmüller adopts Astruc's theory of a double document (Elohistic and Jehovistic) in Genesis; but anything more nugatory than his reasons for

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

accepting it Rose has never read.[1] 'Generally the authors of all the historical books and of Job are unknown, and they were compiled from public monuments, and acts and memoirs, so that it would be absurd to speak of their being inspired.' The Book of Isaiah was 'made up by one writer out of minor works of several.' None of Zechariah after chapter viii. is by that prophet; nor did Jonah write the book bearing his name. The Book of Daniel is not ascribed to Daniel. 'Various schemes have been proposed to take away all notion of independent authorship in the case of the Gospels.'[2] Bretschneider has brought together all the doubts he could find as to the authenticity of St. John. Eichhorn attacks the two Epistles to Timothy and that to Titus.[3] As to the general connexion between the Old and New Testament, Bauer says that all interpreters err by introducing Christian doctrines into the prophetical and poetical parts of the Old Testament;[4] and it is melancholy to find Schleiermacher declaring that 'the prophets can never be satisfactorily shown to have predicted Christ as he actually existed, nor Christianity as it was actually developed.'[5]

At the time when Rose was bringing out his attack on German rationalism a young Oxford student, Edward Bouverie Pusey by name, was making a much profounder study of Biblical criticism, as treated by German scholars, in the course of a visit to various German universities, during which he established friendly relations with teachers representing all shades of theological opinion. Two years later the visit was repeated; and Rose's book, which by that time had been translated into German, and had roused considerable indignation, even among orthodox religionists, came under his notice. Pusey's opinion of rationalism did not differ much from that expressed by the Cambridge preacher, but he disliked Rose's tone and differed from his theory of the cause to which the evil was due. According to him, it arose not from the absence of bishops and subscriptions to articles, but from the cold 'orthodoxism' of the earlier Lutheran divines, imperfectly compensated by the vague pietism which subsequently replaced it.

[1] P. 101. [2] P. 104. [3] P. 105.
[4] P. 150. [5] P. 149.

And he thought that England was threatened with a similar danger so long as her Church had nothing better to offer than the alternative between the high and dry orthodoxy of the old school, on the one side, and the undisciplined enthusiasm of the Evangelicals on the other. But he felt also that Old Testament criticism was the ground where rationalism would deliver its next assault on the Christian faith in England, and just the ground where Anglican theology was least prepared to meet it. He therefore proceeded to equip himself with all the learning needed for the coming conflict, and in no long time received the chair of Hebrew at Oxford as a reward for his labours.

While still a layman, Pusey was persuaded to write a book on German Theology in reply to Rose, who defended himself with characteristic vigour, but in such a manner as to incur the charge of having misrepresented his young adversary, who indeed was at no time distinguished for the gift of lucid exposition. But Pusey could not deny certain concessions to liberalism of which in after life he bitterly repented. He had talked about 'a new era in theology.' He had recommended 'the blending of belief and science.'[1] He admitted that episcopacy was an expedient and desirable institution, the introduction of which would be a blessing to the German Church, without quite realising that the Episcopate is an organic feature of the Church of Christ, the absence of which could not but be attended by spiritual disorder.[2] He spoke of 'the satisfaction of the Sacrifice of Christ to God's infinite justice' as 'a human system.' What this last phrase meant is not very clear; but Bishop Blomfield, to whom Pusey submitted his manuscript, objected to it as inconsistent with Anglican orthodoxy.[3] Worst of all, he betrayed some unsoundness on the question of Biblical infallibility, professing, indeed, his belief in plenary inspiration, but 'not allowing that historical passages in which no religious truth was contained were equally inspired with the rest.[4] This very moderate concession to German criticism was subsequently withdrawn. Apparently the reactionary theologians with whom he was thenceforward associated induced him to believe that the Biblical writers were miraculously protected against

[1] 'Life,' p. 163.
[2] P. 171.
[3] P. 169.
[4] P. 171.

errors in matters of fact—even such as left matters of dogma unaffected.

Pusey's chief colleagues in the Movement did not trouble themselves about Hebrew scholarship. Their method was much easier and simpler. It consisted in resting the authority of the Bible either on the authority of the Church or on the authority of conscience, whichever happened to be more convenient at the time. People complain, says Newman, that the clergy expect them to accept the Bible as God's word without offering sufficient evidence of its divine authority. But this, he tells us, is a mere pretence. They prefer trusting themselves to trusting God. For otherwise why do they not trust their conscience, which is as much a part of themselves as their reason. One might ask in reply what right Newman has to imply that his opponents habitually disregard their moral perceptions, from whatever source these may be derived. It is a mere assumption, a piece of pulpit-bullying. Secure against objection, he challenges us to show 'a man who strictly obeys the law within him, and yet is an unbeliever as regards the Bible.' It will be time enough to produce the various proofs by which the truth of the Bible is confirmed to us when the feat has been accomplished.[1] In other words, the question of Biblical evidences may be safely postponed until the Day of Judgment.

If, as Newman tells us, Whately taught him to think and to use his reason, and if the process was habitually conducted after this fashion, the future archbishop had no great cause to be proud of his pupil. The whole argument revolves on a fallacy of confusion. The man who believes that his conscience tells him what he ought to do may be said to trust it whether he obeys its injunctions or not. He may even believe that his conscience is, as Newman believed, the voice of God, without invariably, and indeed without ever doing as it tells him. Assent is not obedience. Or again, he may habitually obey his conscience, *i.e.* do what he feels is right, without believing that his moral perceptions are divinely inspired. And so doing, or not doing, he may, on purely speculative grounds, believe that Daniel is no more inspired than Judith, or that what

[1] 'Parochial and Plain Sermons,' Vol. I., p. 201.

Coleridge called the Christopaedia of Matthew and Luke is as apocryphal as the Gospel of the Infancy.

One might also ask why a higher standard of conduct should be exacted from the heretic than from the orthodox believer. Is it on the principle that faith, like charity, covers a multitude of sins? By his own daily confession the Christian is very far from impeccable. Yet it would hardly be asserted that his derelictions of duty involve disbelief in the reality of the violated law. And if disobedience is not dissent, neither is dissent disobedience. Indeed of the two it would be safer to argue that the sinful Christian does not believe in God, than that the religious sceptic wishes to be delivered from a law of righteousness, which all the time his conscience tells him is equally binding whether he accepts the doctrine of plenary inspiration or not.

Even if Newman had been referring only to men like Bentham, James Mill, or Grote, whose rejection of what he called revelation was complete, his imputations on their character would have been stupid, ignorant, or dishonest. But, to measure the full extent of his intolerance, we must remember that it began much nearer home. We know from his language about Arnold that with him to question the infallibility of the Old Testament was to forfeit the name of a Christian, and with it, we must suppose, every title to respect. Keble also, at a much later period, put the same inference in a much more summary and crushing form when he told young John Coleridge, afterwards Lord Chief Justice, that only very wicked men could engage in enquiries tending to define and restrict the notion of Biblical inspiration.

To base the authority of the Bible or any other dogma on the authority of the Church was, on the most favourable assumption as regards ecclesiastical unity, to challenge the question, on what, then, rests the authority of the Church? But no practically minded rationalist had any need to push his enquiries so far. There were other Christian communities besides the Anglican establishment, of greater antiquity, and, apart from insular prejudice, with at least equal claims to respect. Nor was this the worst difficulty. The ordained ministry of the Church of England were at odds among themselves. Her Articles, so confidently held up by Rose as an example to

German Protestantism, had notoriously been framed on a compromise, so as to include believers of the most divergent doctrinal views—a circumstance of which the Oxford leaders were soon to take the fullest advantage in their ever nearer approximation to Rome. And the vaster religious movement which preceded Tractarianism was filling both ministry and congregation with devotees whose tendencies were still more markedly in the opposite direction—towards Geneva. A curious and now forgotten episode of Church-history brought the resulting anarchy of opinion into sudden and sharp relief.

About 1820 Calvinism had grown to such a height within the establishment that the ablest man on the Bench, Herbert Marsh, Bishop of Peterborough, already mentioned as Thirlwall's predecessor in New Testament criticism, had recourse to a very drastic method for preventing its further extension in his own diocese. He drew up a paper of eighty-seven questions on points of doctrine which every candidate had to answer satisfactorily before he could be ordained, and every curate ordained elsewhere before he could be licensed. A very few inches of blank paper were allowed for the answers, which had to be short, plain, and positive, in order that the bishop might 'know whether the opinions of the persons examined accorded with those of the Church,'—that is to say with his own. On two occasions the subject was brought before the House of Lords, which, however, refused to interfere. Marsh defended himself vigorously; the other bishops remained absolutely silent.[1] There seemed no reason why a system of exclusion, founded on a directly opposite system of interpretation, should not be enforced in any other diocese.

That such a calamity did not befall the Church of England was due, above all, to her connexion with the State—an 'organic feature' of which we may say more truly than Liddon said of the Episcopate, that 'its absence could not but be attended by spiritual disorder.' For the bishops chosen by English Prime Ministers have, as a rule, been moderate and statesmanlike divines, careful not to push things to such an extremity as Dr. Marsh, even when they might feel themselves justified by what, no doubt, was his motive, the desire to protect their

[1] Harriet Martineau's 'History of England,' Vol. I., p. 381; Sydney Smith's 'Works,' Vol. II., pp. 270–91.

flocks against extreme views. And when the bishops lose their heads—as afterwards happened in the case of 'Essays and Reviews'—the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is there to keep the balance straight.

But this subordination of the clerical to the lay element had originally been constituted on a basis which recent legislation seemed to have undermined. By the organic settlement of 1689 the whole legislative power, and practically the whole executive and judiciary powers, were reserved for members of the established Church, to the exclusion of Roman Catholics, of Protestant Dissenters, and of Jews. But the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, and the Emancipation Act of 1829, had terminated this monopoly so far as Christians were concerned; while the abolition of Jewish disabilities seemed already in sight. Thus the State was becoming completely secularised, and that too at a moment when the pietistic reaction was leading up to a passionate reassertion of hierocratic pretensions within the Establishment.

A still heavier strain was put on the relations between Church and State by the return of the Whigs to power, and the great events to which it led. Always an anti-clerical party, they had latterly gained the reputation of being an infidel party as well; while their allies and destined successors, the philosophical Radicals, were known to be for the most part without any religious belief whatever. Bentham, the oracle of advanced Liberalism, had attacked the Church with undisguised hatred; John Mill, its rising hope, had been brought up without any belief in God. As for the middle classes, into whose hands power was passing, no very distinct ideas about their faith seem to have been entertained; but it was certain that a vast number of Dissenters were included in their ranks, who probably would demand admission to the old universities for their sons, or else set up new universities of their own, without tests and without theological teaching; while the means by which the Reform Bill had been carried seemed to show that they had little scruple in using threats, or even violence, in order to push their measures through a reluctant legislature.

Such was the state of affairs when Lord Grey advised the bishops to put their house in order. It is not clear whether he

intended this as a warning to apply to themselves the rest of the Biblical quotation, and prepare for immediate death, that is to say, for the loss of their seats in the House of Lords, if not for the disestablishment and disendowment of their Church. Perhaps he was only hinting that they had better attend more exclusively to their pastoral duties for the future. It is not unlikely that a certain curtailment and redistribution of the ecclesiastical revenues may have entered into his views. Anyhow, assuming, as the Oxford High Churchmen did, that he was actuated by hostile motives, the Liberal leader showed his skill by attacking the enemy's position at its weakest point, the temporalities of the Irish establishment.

The Protestant Church of Ireland had long been a scandal to religion. Set up from political motives as a bulwark of English ascendency, it appropriated to the use of a small minority, comprising the richest part of the community, revenues originally assigned to the endowment of what still continued to be the faith of the vast majority. It had never performed the functions of a missionary church, and many of its preferments had no duties attached to them, or duties which could have been performed at a much lower rate of remuneration. The parochial clergy were, on the whole, a very deserving body, and had recently become objects of compassion from the hardships and dangers to which they were subjected by their anomalous position among a bitterly hostile population. On the other hand, the Irish Protestant episcopate, although adorned with some very eminent names, had not acquired during the two and a half centuries of its existence any great reputation for sanctity or moral worth. But whatever might be said in praise or blame of these dignitaries, to the Liberal mind one thing at least was certain—there were too many of them. Four archbishops and eighteen bishops, receiving among them one hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year, constituted, in the language of political economy, a supply vastly exceeding the demand of eight hundred thousand people. Lord Grey's government proposed to suppress two archbishoprics and eight bishoprics, reserving for the legislature the right to dispose of their revenues as it thought fit. Subsequent events proved that, in the opinion of the Liberals, the fund thus accruing would be most fitly devoted to secular uses.

When Lord Grey had taken his stand on the highest principles of reason, which in this instance were principles of justice and expediency as well, it was quite in order that his theological opponents, avowedly representing the cause of unreason, should take their stand on the principles of folly and wrong. They had already agreed to stake their dogmatic convictions on the impeccable morality and infallible historical accuracy of the records kept by a lying and bloodthirsty priesthood.[1] They now proceeded to stake the honour of their holy Mother Church on the continuance of a system whereby ten useless and worldly-minded prelates were gorged with the plunder of a famished people, claiming the proud title of Catholic by an older and more august investiture than theirs. And the occasion chosen for declaring war on the modern spirit of righteousness and humanity was well fitted to exhibit the incongruity of their ideals with all that the best and most enlightened Englishmen now held most dear.

On Sunday, July 14, 1833, John Keble was appointed to preach the Assize Sermon before the King's Judges in St. Mary's, Oxford. One would have thought that then, if ever, when honest men without distinction of calling or belief met together for the requital of wrongs done to society as such, the distinction between the spiritual and temporal powers, as also the doctrinal distinctions separating good citizens from one another, might have been momentarily merged in their common eagerness for the vindication of innocence and the avenging of crime. Such, however, was not Keble's opinion, nor was it the opinion of his friends. His text was taken from a narrative in the first book of Samuel, where the falsifying hand of a prophetic or sacerdotal historian has been most evidently at work in the interests of his order. The object of this personage, whoever he may have been, was to create a prejudice against the heroic but ill-fated founder of that monarchy to which the Jews owed their continued existence as a nation, and the Christian Church the possibility of ever having existed at all.

[1] I do not think that such a designation will be found too strong by any one who has mastered the evidence going to show that the stories of wholesale massacre in the Hexateuch are post-exilian fabrications. I am also well aware that, as Ed. Meyer has shown, priesthoods are generally distinguished for their superior humanity.

There is, however, a tragic grandeur about his style which lifts the whole fiction above the level of ordinary calumny to the supreme heights of literary splendour and theocratic terror: in Keble's application the malice alone remains, the sublimity is gone. Saul apparently stands for the Liberal government, and Samuel for the defenders of the threatened Irish temporalities. But the preacher is not long content to occupy such very limited ground, or to expend his eloquence on the defence of such very uninspiring interests. He soon launches out into a comprehensive indictment of the whole English nation—not frankly indeed, not in plain, straightforward language—but still so as to leave no doubt about his meaning. Various symptoms of what he calls national apostasy are described, their presence in the actual state of English politics and society being mostly left for his audience to verify. One charge, however, is sufficiently direct and categorical. This is the terrible accusation that religious intolerance has almost ceased to exist. We place confidence in people without first asking whether their theological belief agrees with our own. Offices are conferred on unorthodox believers, partnerships formed with them, boys sent to their schools, and girls given to them in marriage, whereas we should never even enter their houses. And there is a growing impatience of clerical dictation, which can only be interpreted as a symptom of enmity to Christ himself. As to the repeal of religious disabilities, it may or may not be necessitated by reasons of political expediency; but assuredly to rejoice over such concessions as if they were something to congratulate ourselves on is the sign of a bad spirit. In short, the principles of Hebrew theocracy are no longer recognised as binding on the modern State. And this amounts to saying either that the Old Testament is not infallible in faith and morals, or that its principles are not for ever binding on all mankind.

What Keble, by his own acknowledgment, had in view when he delivered this violent scolding, was the threatened abolition of the Irish bishoprics. When he printed it, that 'calamity'—to use his own language—'had already overtaken the Church of God.' The sees had been suppressed, '*contrary to the suffrage of the Bishops of England and Ireland.*' The time was to come when Keble would support a far more

sweeping measure of disestablishment and disendowment—also carried against episcopal suffrages—on the ground of simple justice. It is gravely questionable whether the author of the Assize Sermon would ever have reached that wider perception of moral truth unaided by the 'march of mind,' across which he and other saintly persons were throwing their whole influence, a generation earlier.

Newman tells us that he used to keep the anniversary of Keble's Assize Sermon as the birthday of the Movement. What the Tractarians undertook then was the defence of a cause not only reactionary but rotten, the cause of Irish Church sinecures, the cause of Protestant ascendency, the cause of episcopal dictation in ecclesiastical legislation, the cause of Old Testament infallibility, of divinely commissioned massacre and murder, of religious exclusiveness enforced by social ostracism.

It was not, however, on the lines of the poet-preacher that the conflict with modern enlightenment was eventually fought out. Newman sided with Keble about the suppressed sees, complaining, in his rhetorical style, that 'half the candlesticks of the Irish Church were extinguished without ecclesiastical sanction,'[1] and his views about Old Testament infallibility were to all appearances the same. But his intellect was far more philosophical than Keble's; his ideas naturally tended towards a more comprehensive and systematic arrangement; as a convert also to High Church principles, not brought up in them like his associate, he felt more keenly the need of finding a logical foundation for authority, of deciding on other than sentimental grounds between the competitive claims on religious faith put forward by conflicting authorities. For him, at least, the prospect of disestablishment had no terrors: the interesting question was, how could the Church of England maintain her old position of pre-eminence if the threatened catastrophe came about? And it was in view of this eventuality that he and his friends began issuing the famous 'Tracts for the Times.'

The series ran to ninety numbers, of which the first and last, both written by Newman, alone possess any historical

[1] Letter to Whately, *apud* Liddon, 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 267; also quoted in an appendix to the 'Apologia' (p. 381).

importance. Tract I. is especially addressed to the clergy. It reminds them that they are a privileged order, with a just claim to peculiar spiritual gifts, originally derived from the Apostles, and transmitted through the ages by episcopal ordination. Pretensions so closely resembling those of the Roman hierarchy involved an ever nearer approximation to the Roman doctrine and discipline; and the object of Tract XC. is to show that an Anglican clergyman may hold the theology of Trent consistently with fidelity to his ordination vows. On the Bishop of Oxford's objecting to this interpretation, the series was discontinued, and after some years more of hesitation Newman, with some others of the party, seceded to Rome, thus bringing the Movement, as originally constituted, to an end.

An amiable member of the party, Isaac Williams, consoled himself with the reflexion that of the actual contributors to the Tracts Newman, who alone had been brought up as an Evangelical, alone forsook the Anglican Church. It seems probable, however, that Hurrell Froude would have taken the same road but for his premature death; and as it was, W. G. Ward, the ablest of Newman's younger disciples, went over a few weeks before his master. The band who rallied under Pusey's leadership counted for nothing at Oxford, and intellectually had little weight in the country. Moreover, Puseyism, like the ship in the 'Arabian Nights,' continued to suffer from the fatal attraction of the magnetic mountain at Rome, the members who had most iron in their composition being the most susceptible to its influence. That the sacerdotal party should subsequently have become known as Ritualists, marks a still deeper descent in the scale of unreason, without a correspondingly stronger hold on the allegiance of aesthetic ophelists. On the decorative side also, Rome is a formidable competitor, and certainly runs no risk of seeing any of her own devotees drawn away by the charms of a rival establishment.

If Isaac Williams unduly depreciated the significance of Newman's secession, others have erred in the opposite direction by overestimating its importance. Whatever course the great leader adopted, his appeal to authority was foredoomed to failure. His method suffered from that fatal flaw in all traditionalist logic, the tendency to spontaneous decomposition exhibited in the multiplication of authorities and in their

internecine conflict. The object of Keble and Newman was, first of all, to resist the inroads of an infidel secularism by rehabilitating the Church in her pristine majesty; and in the next place, both as a means towards this end, and as an end in itself, to stimulate the devotion of her sons and daughters by the freer distribution of spiritual gifts, by more imposing ceremonies, by a more searching penetration into the secrets of the individual conscience. They found that conscience reeling under the terrible weight of responsibility thrown on it by Evangelicalism, and fatigued by a monotonous and barren reference to the 'one sacrifice,' all visible representations of which had been studiously withheld. It turned with enthusiasm to the new guidance, and joyfully surrendered the burdensome obligation of a private judgment which had hardly ever been really exercised. But the more vigorously and successfully the work of reorganisation was pushed on, the more alarmingly did it recall what the Tractarians themselves had begun by repudiating, the doctrine and discipline of Rome. They had appealed to popular prejudice; they had called up the ghosts of superstition and fanaticism; and they were answered by a host of spectres, whose animosity was turned in the first instance against themselves. While denouncing modern individualism, they had expected to be let pick and choose in the past, to mark out for study just those seventeenth-century divines whose teaching accorded with their own. Before long the whole seventeenth century was up in arms about them, with its Cromwell against their St. Charles, its Puritans and Latitudinarians against their Anglo-Catholic Fathers, its Miltons and Lockes against their Bramhalls and Bulls, its philosophy and science against their patristic and scholastic learning. It was remembered that the first generation of Anglican Stuarts had been followed by a second generation of Romanising Stuarts in a state of permanent conspiracy against the laws and the religion of England. Bringing charges of 'national apostasy' was a game that two could play at; and to desert the Reformation seemed a dereliction more justly liable to that reproach than the conduct of those who were working out the ancient principles of English liberty to their furthest consequences.

Even a united Church could hardly have wrested the

control of ecclesiastical legislation from the modern State. And the Church of England was not united, had even been reduced to more hopeless anarchy by the effort to rally her forces against an infidel government. But the irony of fate had not exhausted itself in this confusion of tongues among the unbuilders of Babel. I have already dwelt on the extraordinary array of intellect and character which had been attracted to the Christian ministry by the great religious revival of the period succeeding the fall of French domination in Europe, involving a conspicuous diversion of ability from the service of the world to the service of the Church; while even among the laity an increasing proportion of the noblest intelligences showed the influence of religious ideas in their words and works. But the Tractarian movement could not claim above a quarter of the new energy thus consecrated to religion. The names of Keble, Newman, Hurrell Froude, W. G. Ward, and Church among the clergy, Gladstone and Roundell Palmer among the laity, proved, indeed, with what high and diversified powers the most reactionary principles could coexist. But the list could not be extended without drawing on a class whose adhesion confers no particular prestige on the creed to which it is given, their preferences being determined by authority, whether openly acknowledged as such, or disguised under the name of private judgment. Lord Ashley belongs to Evangelicalism. Peacock, Sedgwick, Whewell, and Merivale stand, on the whole, outside party. But the various shades of liberal theology show an array of ability and virtue comprising more than half the total amount given to the service of religion. Among the clergy we find the names of Blanco White, Whately, Milman, Arnold, Baden Powell, Julius Hare, Thirlwall, John Sterling, Maurice, and Arthur Stanley; of James Martineau among the Nonconformist ministers, of Francis Newman and Tennyson among the Anglican laity; of Robert and Elizabeth Browning among the Nonconformist laity. All these may be reckoned as opponents of sacerdotalism through their whole career, while more than half of them more or less openly gave up the belief in dogma and miracle before its close.

There is nothing to surprise us in such a development of pietism, if the explanation offered in a former chapter of the whole religious revival be accepted as correct. If, as I suggested,

it arose from a gradual upheaval of the more uneducated and sentimental classes, bringing with them their characteristic conceptions into the higher circles of civilisation, and imposing them at last on the highest summits of thought, then we shall be prepared to find a certain innovating temper, a revolutionary boldness even, about the whole movement, unfavourable to stereotyped creeds. Even the Tractarians had their share of that subversive spirit, and were therefore more keen to detect its presence and possibilities in other minds. Thus they recognised the liberal theologians as their most formidable rivals, before those theologians had become conscious of their own tendencies, and attacked their methods with inquisitorial zeal as the first step towards complete infidelity.

Even standing alone, the Broad Church school would have been an overmatch for the Catholicising reactionaries at the moment of their fierce struggle for leadership in the Church, and would have ruined their schemes of reorganisation by acting as an element of dispersion and decomposition on the whole religious life of the age. But Arnold, Milman, and the others did not stand alone. Much as it might have scandalised them to hear it said, the liberal and reasoning religionists, clerical and lay, who led the left wing of the whole pietistic movement, occupied the extreme right of a much vaster intellectual movement whose left wing stood outside Christianity altogether, joining hands with a parallel evolution in France and Germany. To confront such an array was to face the certainty of being outflanked and rolled up.

Thus, whatever else Keble and Newman accomplished, they totally failed in their original design, which was to arrest the destructive action of reason on religious belief, by winning for the English clergy a higher authority as referees in matters of faith. To set up an infallible tradition did not make Biblical infallibility or the Athanasian creed more credible—least of all when the tradition itself went to pieces in the struggle between rival Churches, or rival parties in the same Church.

It may be claimed on behalf of Newman, and of the other High Church leaders who joined in his secession, that they enabled great numbers of English people to retain or recover their faith by placing it under the protection of the Roman Church. It is, however, very questionable whether such

adhesions have any significance whatever for the intellectual life of the country; whether they imply any real increase or even conservation of what was once known as faith; whether Rome herself has not lost more than she has gained by the accession of so many unquiet souls to her already mutinous ranks. And, apart from this subtle infiltration of scepticism, her position has been sapped by an influence which, acting on all religious communities, acts with the greatest proportionate effect on the most authoritative.

When Newman began to write, Biblical infallibility was accepted by nearly all religious believers, as the necessary alternative to complete infidelity. To believe so much proved the capacity for believing a great deal more; and in the absence of a sound logical training many Protestants, not otherwise of deficient intelligence, let themselves be led on to accepting the infallibility of tradition, of the Primitive Church, of the Roman Church, and of the Pope. But since then, under decorous circumlocutions, this dogma has been set aside, even among the successors of Pusey, avowedly in deference to modern criticism; and apparently the analogous claims of tradition—primitive or otherwise—have been similarly abandoned. Now, it might have been supposed, and indeed it was supposed by many, that the loss of so great an authority, and the general sense of insecurity wrought by the admission of destructive criticism into what seemed the fundamentals of religious belief, would create a proportionately greater demand for certainty, and a readier submission to the dictation of authority elsewhere. With the decay of traditionalism and mysticism, scepticism steps in as an aid to faith.

And so it might have been but for two decisive circumstances. The first is that whatever tends to destroy a Protestant's belief in the infallibility, or the inspiration, or the authenticity of the Bible tells to a precisely equal degree against the authority of a Church which guarantees its divine authorship. The second is that what we call the Higher Criticism has been accepted by many Catholics, to the extent of leading them to regard large portions of Scripture as unhistorical, or, in plain language, as fictitious. There is, they think, the same certainty about its conclusions that there is about the accepted teachings of astronomy or geology, which are beyond the reach of

theological contradiction. Dogmatic declarations to the contrary may be dealt with in various ways. It may be frankly admitted that they are mistaken, at whatever cost to infallibility; or the Church may have gone beyond her proper sphere in formulating them; or their meaning may be something quite different from what was formerly supposed. But, on any alternative, the security once associated with a profession of the Catholic faith has ceased to exist. At this rate the personality of God and the immortality of the soul may, as Schleiermacher held, be no part of true religion. And to the lay understanding at least, which is the understanding of most people, the pantheist or the humanitarian has nothing to gain by going to mass. As for the clergy, our future Newmans will hardly feel tempted to exchange a position like that of Canon Cheyne for a position like that of the Abbé Loisy.

It has been said that the Church of England is what Newman has made her. It might be said with as much truth that England is what the Stuarts have made her. They certainly did a good deal for her fleet, as the Tractarians have done for the comeliness and efficiency of the Church services. But the original purpose of the Tracts has been defeated not less thoroughly than the designs of the first Charles and of the second James. As Mrs. Browning observed, they were rather Tracts against the Times than for the Times; and the times have got the better of their authors. National apostasy, in Keble's sense, has been carried to an extreme which makes the conditions under Lord Grey's government seem mediaeval in comparison. The State has gone its way, remodelling old establishments and reinterpreting old dogmas, with the most complete indifference as to whether its decrees were 'contrary to the suffrages of the Bishops of England and Ireland' or not. Worse still, by what Keble might have called a mysterious and awful dispensation of Providence, the chief instrument employed for this fatal work of secularisation has been the darling child of Anglicanism, the most distinguished ornament for intellect and character of the High Church party, if not the most distinguished Englishman of the whole century. By Gladstone the endowment of Maynooth and of Peel's godless colleges was supported; by Gladstone popular unsectarian

education was sanctioned; by Gladstone the Irish Church was disestablished and disendowed; by Gladstone's government theological tests in the English universities were abolished; finally, an avowed and aggressive agnostic was admitted into Gladstone's cabinet, favoured with his confidence, and charged with the preparation of his biography.

'Grace,' exclaims Pascal, in the highest flight of his sublime eloquence, 'grace can never want defenders, being all-powerful to create them for herself.' Reason, unfortunately, is not omnipotent; but she shares with grace the glorious privilege of finding and forming defenders even in the ranks of her bitterest enemies.

A far greater number of High Churchmen have followed Gladstone on the path of political liberalism than have followed Newman on the path to Rome. Probably a majority of well-educated Anglicans would now profess somewhat democratic opinions, while not a few have gone a long way in the direction of socialism. According to all it is a traditional principle with the Church to side with the oppressed against the oppressors, with law against tyranny, and generally with the poor against the rich. And they might fairly urge that the anti-liberal principles of their original leader were rather the survival of an old Oxford prejudice than an essential element in the religious reformation he started. But it is by no means clear where the accidents end and the essentials begin. Perhaps no inmate of Keble College would agree with Keble in looking on the social and political abandonment of religious exclusiveness as an act of national apostasy. Safeguards of the faith, it might be contended, are not the faith itself. But what is of faith, and where are authoritative definitions of faith to be found? Highly ornamented buildings for the celebration of divine service are good as far as they go, but they can hardly tell the worshippers what to believe; nor can Church Congresses put forward any claim to infallibility. Granting, what cannot be proved, that our bishops and curates are descended from the Apostles by a continuous chain of ordination, it is by no means self-evident that the process converts them into supernatural depositories of revealed truth; for on such a theory the difference between the Roman and Anglican Churches would be inexplicable. Besides, the supposed promise of infallibility

given to the Apostles rests on texts of Scripture whose authenticity can no longer be treated as above dispute. High Churchmen who call the stories in Genesis myths, and put their own interpretation on their religious meaning, cannot refuse others the right of treating Gospel texts after a similar method; all the less because certain predictions about the end of the world would necessitate a very free handling, if the credit of their author or of their reporters is to be preserved intact.

The early Tractarians took the Bible on the authority of tradition; and there seems no doubt that its plenary inspiration was accepted by all but a few scholars within the Church. Modern criticism has shown that the Church, or those claiming to speak in her name, was mistaken on this point, and therefore fallible on every point. The two authorities fall together; or the Church's authority can only be upheld by a system of exegesis so contrary to the rules of interpretation, as hitherto accepted, that not a word in theology is safe from having a meaning put upon it totally unlike that which it has hitherto been supposed to carry.

Nor indeed have we far to go for examples of the process. Newman mentions among other doctrines held by the whole Catholic Church, the imputation of Adam's sin to his descendants. His present followers do not believe in a personal Adam, and must therefore understand something widely different from what he and his hearers understood by 'imputation of sin' and 'descent.' He also speaks of the reconciliation of God the Father 'to us sinners by the death of Christ'; and a comparison with other passages shows him to have meant, what nearly every theologian then meant, that this reconciliation involved our salvation from hell by the vicarious sufferings of the Redeemer. But this particularly atrocious theory of the atonement has now been abandoned even by the most orthodox Anglicans, thanks largely to the influence of Maurice, though what they have put in its place no one seems able to explain.

Another dogma included with undoubted confidence in the High Church profession of faith was the endlessness of future torments for the wicked. But already in the thirties and forties High Church laymen such as Southey [1] and Wordsworth [2]

[1] Crabb Robinson's 'Diary,' Vol. II., p. 315.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. III., p. 210.

were found to deny it privately in strong terms, while even Faber did not attempt to defend it.[1] Modern divines prefer to remain silent on the subject; but they are admittedly free to follow Maurice's interpretation in this instance, thereby displacing the whole axis of their original theology. Already indeed, 'the sense of sin, original and actual, as an evil attaching to one and all,' has been removed from its old place as 'the initial element of all true religion'—an arrangement fully accepted even by Coleridge—the fact of the Incarnation being substituted for it. But the Incarnation itself may be explained away to any extent, particularly with German help;[2] and the high Eucharistic doctrine with which it has become intimately associated in recent religious developments, may even accelerate the process. For the union of God with bread and wine suggests by its paradoxicality a mystical evasion of the literal sense, capable of extension to the whole circle of metaphysical notions connected with the union of God and man.

We have seen what the Movement failed to do; we have now to determine what it did, in reference to the general trend of English thought, dismissing as much as possible from our minds the current commonplaces on the subject.

The first result of the propaganda was a wide diffusion of sacerdotal ideas among the younger clergy and a fair number of the laity. An unnamed controversialist quoted by Newman in 1839 as 'the scoffing author of the Via Media,' speaks of the Via as 'crowded with young enthusiasts who never presume to argue with any one except against the propriety of arguing at all.' Baden Powell, destined hereafter to a brief blaze of celebrity as the boldest of Broad Church essayists, admitted that 'Tractarian opinions and views of theology were extensively adopted and strenuously upheld, and were daily gaining ground among a considerable and influential portion of the members as well as ministers of the Established Church.' Isaac Taylor complained that the spread of these doctrines had 'severed the religious community into two portions, between which every

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] I may even add, with French help; for the Abbé Loisy, if I understand him rightly, looks on divinity as a heathenish idea to which the early Christian Church had to accommodate herself.

man would soon be compelled to make his choice.' By the irony of circumstance the young enthusiasts of the Via Media found themselves denounced by one of their own bishops as reviving 'the worst evils of the Romish system,' in their reaction against the right of private judgment.[1]

In reality the Movement did not so much alter men's convictions as possess itself of a vast body of pre-existing religious sentiment, which it led by pre-existing channels toward a predetermined goal. In view of an eternal life beyond the grave, pietism fixes the believer's whole attention on its tremendous possibilities, and degrades the world of experience into a mere preparation for the imagined world to come. With this crushing weight of responsibility on his conscience, the religious believer begins by brooding in solitude over his own chance of perdition or salvation, then joins in the devotional exercises and mutual confidences of a few other like-minded persons. Together they ransack the records of similar experiences handed down from earlier periods of religious excitement, reviving obsolete practices and tapping buried sources of inspiration, searching out ways of access to the secrets of what is unseen or is to be. Lastly, with the decline of individual ardour and energy, they have recourse to the ready-made organisation provided by the experience of ages for the outdoor and indoor relief of the destitute souls whom sloth, disease, imbecility, or old age have left without the capacity for self-help.

Such in general outline is the course described by religious thought in England during the century which began with Wesley's call and ended with the last Tract for the Times. But such a purely schematic representation answers very imperfectly to the things of actual life, especially when we are dealing with such a complex civilisation as our own. Not all Evangelicals, nor perhaps a majority of them, followed Newman; and what their party lost by the diversion of so much strong religious feeling into new channels was more than compensated by the advantage of posing as the champions of English Protestantism against Rome. In this way they could appeal to the most violent feeling of what their countrymen were susceptible. Long ages of oppression and spoliation

[1] J. H. Newman's 'Essays, Critical and Historical,' Vol. I., pp. 264–6. The passages in quotation marks are cited by Newman.

exercised by the Holy See, followed by other ages of stealthy plotting for the recovery of its lost prey, have imbued the English people with a deadly hatred and fear of what it calls Popery. On the other hand, the articles and liturgy of the English Church were purposely so framed as to enable that numerous body of Englishmen who still retained their old creed under Elizabeth to join in the only public worship authorised by law. Of this arrangement the Tractarians took full advantage, claiming, not unjustly, the right to interpret legal obligations by legal rules. But it gave them a bad name with the unlearned. As they approached ever nearer to conformity with Roman standards, the cry raised against them of treason and apostasy grew louder and louder, until the whole movement was violently arrested, and its leaders silenced, driven over the border, or dispersed.

Their argumentative overthrow was due in the first instance to such Broad Churchmen as Whately, Arnold, and Baden Powell, in the last instance to the rationalistic current by which these men were supported and borne along. But the fruits of victory, for the moment at least, fell to others. The Evangelicals, now more fitly designated as Low Churchmen, remained masters of the field. They had received a large leaven of the old arid orthodoxy, and had become more narrow, fanatical, and intolerant than before. Hateful as a party to all well-educated and liberal-minded persons, they were still strong enough to prevent doubts about what they called religion from finding public expression. A certain latitudinarian tradition which had long survived from the preceding century now seemed to be finally dying out. As for the great English school of deism whence the rationalistic movements of Scotland, France, and Germany had chiefly sprung, it was never mentioned but as something obsolete and exploded.

It would, however, be unjust to make the Low Church responsible for an intolerance which belongs to the very essence of pietism, and was shared by every party that partook of its spirit. If Newman and his friends had not been able definitely to substitute authority and tradition for scientific evidence, they succeeded at least in crushing out the faint beginnings of Biblical criticism which had appeared in the late

twenties. They had also excluded the teaching of physical science from Oxford.[1] As taught at Cambridge, it does not seem to have had any very illuminating effect. We hear of a Cambridge rationalist party in 1828—perhaps disciples of Coleridge—and of their taking Pusey's side against Rose, but nothing seems to have come of it.[2] In 1834 Thirlwall was driven from Trinity by Dr. Wordsworth for supporting the admission of Dissenters to degrees, and opposing the compulsory attendance of undergraduates at chapel. Whewell, who succeeded Wordsworth as Master of Trinity, was a little more liberal; but he regarded the constitution of Church and State in England as the ideal of reason.

Public opinion in the country was hardly, if at all, more advanced than at the universities. John Mill's readers were probably the most tolerant class of the community; yet we are told that the circulation of his organ, the 'London Review,' was injured by the suspicion of irreligion. Mill himself had intended at one time to write a history of the French Revolution, and had even collected materials for the purpose; but he abandoned his design on finding that it would lead to the disclosure of his religious opinions. Their publication, it is said, would have entailed the loss of his post at the India House.

Unbelief, where it existed, was a thing to be carefully concealed. Romilly's son forgot this rule, and showed so little consideration for the memory of the great law-reformer as to print a prayer, written by his father, in which he 'makes not the least allusion to any Christian tenet.' 'What right,' asks Brougham, had the biographer 'to proclaim to the world that' Romilly 'was not a Christian?'[3]

Nothing proves the reactionary spirit of the thirties better than the fate of the celebrated Appropriation Clause. It will be remembered that Lord Grey, in suppressing certain Irish bishoprics and other ecclesiastical positions of emolument, reserved for Parliament the disposal of the revenues thus obtained, with the evident intention of devoting them to secular purposes. Subsequently Lord Grey's successors, Melbourne and Russell, proposed that the money should be used

[1] 'Life and Letters' of Sir Charles Lyell, Vol. II., p. 82 (1843).
[2] Liddon's 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 175.
[3] Macvey Napier's 'Correspondence,' p. 333.

for the education of the Irish people, irrespective of creeds. Their measure passed the House of Commons repeatedly, but on each occasion was thrown out by the Lords, and at last withdrawn in despair. They had the support of parliamentary Liberalism, but the people at large were evidently hostile to the secularisation of Church property, or they would have forced the Lords to give way. In studying what happened to the Irish Church thirty years later, we shall have occasion to observe how deeply legislation was affected by the intervening revolution in religious thought.

During the whole of this period great enthusiasm for education prevailed, or was professed; and much was done by lectures, cheap publications, and the like, for what people called the diffusion of useful knowledge. But even the liberal Church leaders, Arnold and Whately, much as they loved education, seemed to consider it a positive evil when unaccompanied by religious instruction. Arnold withdrew from the London University because theology was given no place in its curriculum—not a surprising omission, as it had been established for unsectarian purposes; and he discountenanced that most excellent periodical the 'Penny Magazine,' because its pages were not weighted with religious articles. If it taught morality, that only made things worse, for morality without religion was poison.[1] So bitterly intolerant was this great educationist that he would willingly have sent James Mill to Botany Bay for not agreeing with his religious opinions.[2] Being himself a reformer, for him the evidence of Christianity lay chiefly in what he considered its efficacy as a reforming and moralising power. The opposition between one Christian denomination and another disappeared before the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian society. Priestcraft, on the other hand, as interfering with this Christian spirit of comprehensiveness, was essentially an anti-Christian thing, to be cast out as the mystery of iniquity.[3]

Whately approached the question from a more intellectual

[1] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. I., p. 247.
[2] Wilfrid Ward, 'W. G. Ward and the Catholic Revival,' p. 458.
[3] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 53.

point of view. Inheriting the eighteenth-century view that Christianity could be proved by external evidence, he wished that evidence to be taught even to the pupils of elementary schools in a form acceptable to all denominations, and of course also in the universities, London included, lest religion should be placed at a disadvantage in comparison with other branches of knowledge, for all the propositions of which good reasons could be given. With him, as with Newman, a strong logical faculty went with an extraordinary credulity about matters of fact; and while his faith was much less fanatical than Arnold's, it embraced a far larger number of absurdities, from the longevity of the antediluvial patriarchs to the juggles of modern spiritualism. Ill-breeding and exorbitant vanity made him personally more intolerant of contradiction; although very wide differences of opinion, if kept at a sufficient distance, left the generosity of his character and the breadth of his intellectual sympathies unaffected.

As a result of our enquiry, it would seem that neither the great revival of religious enthusiasm, nor the extraordinary accession of genius and learning received by the Church of England during so many years, nor the claim to be the sole depository of revealed truth put forward on her behalf by some of the most gifted among these recruits, had strengthened her position against hostile criticism. On the contrary, they had been a source of disunion and weakness. The dread of Rome and the dread of rationalism were just strong enough to hold each other in check. As was natural in the home of compromise, truth passed for being a mean between two extremes; and several distinct directions disputed among themselves the honour of being the genuine Via Media. But none of them could show a fixed point of departure nor a goal where all might meet. Unable alike to advance or to recede, and occupied with the pettiest personalities, Church parties were dying of intellectual inanition, as the people were dying of hunger in their factories and fields. Yet they were still strong enough to prevent other guides from undertaking a task which they had proved powerless to perform; for while the clergy were sinking ever lower in popular estimation, they retained nearly the whole education of the country in their hands.

How England was rescued from this deplorable condition by two influences, imported from the European Continent, and brought to bear almost simultaneously on the minds of the new generation, will be related in the following chapter.

NOTE ON PAGE 351, LAST LINE.

Keble died in 1866, more than three years before the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church. The statement in the text is therefore, as it stands, not strictly accurate. What actually happened is this: In the course of a conversation at Hursley between Keble and Newman about the Oxford election of 1865, Newman said that had he been still a member of the University, he 'must have voted against Mr. Gladstone, because he was giving up the Irish Establishment.' 'On this,' Newman relates, 'Keble came close to me and whispered in my ear (I cannot recollect the exact words, but I took them to be), "And is not that just?"' (Coleridge's 'Life of Keble,' Vol. II., p. 529). What I have said, therefore, about Keble's change of attitude remains substantially true. Keble's saying that 'most of the men who had difficulties about' the inspiration of Holy Scripture 'were too wicked to be reasoned with,' will be found on p. 582 of the same volume.

CHAPTER IX

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

Not often has English literature fallen so low as during the great revival of religious interests in England. Limiting our attention to the southern portion of this island, with whose intellectual history alone we are here concerned, and therefore leaving Scott out of account, it may be affirmed that no great literary work in prose or poetry was written by any Englishman between 'Don Juan' and the 'Pickwick Papers.' We may even go further and say that no great and serious work of prolonged and concentrated interest was produced between 'Hyperion' and 'Jane Eyre.' Carlyle's 'Sartor Resartus' and his 'French Revolution' may be quoted as exceptions; but Carlyle cannot, any more than Scott, be counted among truly English men of letters; his whole training was different; he moved about London as a stranger; his religious attachments were so utterly alien that a child of the English Church, or even of English Nonconformity, has great difficulty in understanding his language about Newman and Keble.[1] After a time he became to some extent, though never perfectly, assimilated, and entered more fully into the stream of English thought; but that time did not arrive until he had been settled in London for some years. His influence began earlier; but it was a foreign influence, and directed towards the acclimatisation of foreign ideas. Tennyson will also be mentioned; and his early poems, published in 1830 and 1832, are certainly first-class literature; but they are very short, and there are very few of them. On the other hand, the production of periodical literature was enormous. Much of it reached a very high order of

[1] He also brought with him to London the Scotch notion of Cromwell as a 'Fanatic-Hypocrite,' which he ridiculed so unsparingly in 'Hero-Worship' after Mill had opened his eyes to Cromwell's greatness.

excellence, and is still widely read—more widely, indeed, than when it first appeared; but even collected essays exercise less influence than books originally planned and published as organic wholes; and many of the best essays printed during that period were not republished in book form until a considerably later date.

Wordsworth has said that the true antithesis to poetry is not prose, but science; and in fact what was impoverishing literature, both in poetry and prose, was, next to the religious agitation, the diversion of intellectual interest to physical science. A certain movement in this direction was already making itself felt at the beginning of the century, when scientific lectures at the Royal Institution were attended by large audiences, among whom ladies were included.[1] But the more general spread of a taste for science through the country, as evinced by the sale of books on the subject, seems to date from 1830, the year when Sir John Herschel's 'Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy' was published as the opening volume of Lardner's 'Cabinet Cyclopaedia.' It 'captivated readers of all classes,'[2] and, if we may judge by a reference in Miss Edgeworth's 'Helen,' was discussed by cultivated ladies in fashionable drawing-rooms. In the following year the British Association was founded. Not long afterwards a ludicrous story to the effect that creatures like human beings had been detected by a powerful telescope on the surface of the moon, obtained wide circulation and caused considerable excitement. Such a hoax would not have been attempted had not interest in the progress of discovery been generally diffused. And popular fiction testifies to the existence of such an interest. The type of young lady who figures in 'Pride and Prejudice' as a student of literature and moral philosophy, reappears as a student of astronomy in Disraeli's 'Sybil.' Ten years before Sybil's time ladies had congregated to hear Lyell's first professorial lectures at King's College, London, but were subsequently excluded by the governors; their attendance at Wheatstone's lectures being also prohibited by the Bishop of London.

[1] This is shown by Brougham's ignorant attack on Thomas Young in the 'Edinburgh Review.'

[2] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' Vol. XXVI., p. 264.

Astronomy and geology were the two most popular sciences. Professor Nichol of Glasgow did most to arouse interest in celestial phenomena. George Eliot, while still an Evangelical, describes herself as 'revelling in' his 'Architecture of the Heavens' (1841).[1] But geology had more the charm of new discovery, of unexpected revelations, of secrets still in reserve. Harriet Martineau tells us that in the period following the unexampled vogue of Scott's novels, 'the general middle-class public purchased five copies of an expensive work on geology to one of the most popular novels of the time.'[2] Geology had, indeed, to a far greater extent than any other science, as then studied, the interest of coming into contact with the Bible, by way of confirmation or by way of collision. Danger from astronomy seemed forgotten. Edward Young had called it the mother of devotion. Johnson had said that the stars in their courses fought against infidelity. But the new science showed less docility. Before the end of the eighteenth century palaeontological evidence was already used by freethinkers to discredit the Mosaic cosmogony; and Chateaubriand, in his defence of Christianity, was driven to the grotesque evasion of supposing that the fossils were created in the rocks.[3] I have already mentioned the obscurantist movement of 1824,[4] about which Coleridge complained to Crabb Robinson, a movement in which even Sir Humphry Davy was not ashamed to take part.[5] Apparently the reactionists found geology easier to convert than to silence. In a country where university teaching was monopolised by the clergy, the reconciliation did not prove difficult. Poetical divines could not, indeed, talk any longer about a 'rose-red city half as old as time.' Even the age of Damascus was not commensurable with the enormous periods requisite on any computation for the processes of stratification and denudation. But time could be provided *ad libitum*, either in the undefined epoch when 'the earth was without form and void,' or by stretching the creative days into ages.[6] On the other hand,

[1] 'George Eliot's Life,' Vol. I., p. 89.
[2] 'History of England,' Vol. II., p. 334.
[3] 'Génie du Christianisme,' Pt. I., chap. iv., sect. 5.
[4] *Supra*, p. 234.
[5] 'Crabb Robinson's Diary,' Vol. II., p. 273.
[6] It is perhaps as well to mention that the Hebrew word for 'day' in

geology, so far from opposing, seemed actively to support the story of a universal deluge by pointing to the former submergence of what is now dry land, and by bringing to light remains of animals found in caves, which were supposed to have perished in that catastrophe.

Nor was this the sole service to religion with which the new science was credited. There seemed good reason for believing that Noah's deluge was not the only event of its kind. From the necessary imperfection of the geological record men erroneously inferred the existence of a real discontinuity between the successive epochs of the earth's history. From time to time terrible catastrophes, as was thought, supervened, caused either by fire or by water, destroying all life on the surface of the globe, and necessitating on each occasion a fresh exercise of creative power. Here, then, was that very evidence of miraculous interference with the course of nature which Hume, as was supposed, had triumphantly challenged theologians to supply. Here were witnesses that could neither lie nor be deceived, 'sermons in stones,' preaching the existence and power of God. Whatever Macaulay might say to the contrary, natural theology *was* a progressive science. Cuvier had carried the Socratic argument from design a step further by proving that there was a time when organisms giving evidence of purpose did not exist. Aristotle was wrong when he taught that the same specific types had existed from eternity in an eternal world, being transmitted from parent to offspring without beginning or end.

Hume would not have been so easily disconcerted as his oppugners assumed. A slight shift in the wording of his famous formula would have twisted the argument from their hands. It is contrary to experience that the course of nature should be interrupted; it is not contrary to experience that men of science should be mistaken. And, even if catastrophes were established, the sceptic had a quite conceivable alternative to fall back on. In our ignorance of natural forces it was not legitimate to dogmatise about what the prolific agencies of the earth could or could not produce. In point of fact Agassiz believed that after each glacial period a new flora and fauna came into existence

Genesis, chap. i. no more means 'an age' than the word for 'made' means 'caused to be evolved,' or than the word for 'God' means 'energy.'

by spontaneous generation. It is between such an origin and gradual evolution, not between evolution and supernatural creation, that science has to choose.

Coleridge, under the guidance of Hume and Kant, had seen the weakness of the argument from design, and Newman saw it still. But English men of science, being at that time destitute of philosophical culture, kept playing variations on Paley, with great satisfaction to their multitudinous readers, and considerable profit to themselves. Lord Bridgewater, dying in 1829, had left eight thousand pounds to subsidise literature of this description; and his trustees divided the money among eight scientific writers, half of them clergymen, who each produced a treatise to the desired effect, duly supplying what a sarcastic savant called 'power, wisdom, and goodness as per order.' John Mill complained that 'writers on natural theology could not consider the greatness and wisdom of God, once for all, as proved;'[1] which was not very wonderful when they were paid to bring fresh proofs; and Macaulay observed that 'the discoveries of modern astronomers and anatomists have really added nothing to that argument which a reflecting mind finds in every beast, bird, insect, fish, leaf, flower, and shell.' But in fact the discoveries, not the argument, were the interesting thing. As Murchison wittily observed, Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise was more properly 'a bridge-over-the-water treatise.'[2] With others of the same kind, it facilitated the transition from a purely theological view to a purely scientific view of the world.

For the moment theology seemed triumphant. At a meeting of the British Association held at Bristol in 1836 Moore the poet declared that 'Science was the handmaid, or rather the torch-bearer to Religion.'[3] At Liverpool, the year after, Sedgwick told his audience that if he found his science 'interfere in any of its tenets with the representations or doctrines of Scripture he would dash it to the ground.'[4] Later again, in 1841 another clerical geologist, Conybeare, is 'delighted to find so' much religious feeling among the present race of scientific men.'[5]

[1] 'Dissertations and Discussions,' Vol. I., p. 105.
[2] Lyell's 'Life and Letters,' Vol. I., p. 473.
[3] Caroline Fox, 'Journals and Letters,' Vol. I., p. 8.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 41.
[5] *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

Some who were themselves without that feeling respected it in others and studiously avoided offending it. Charles Lyell, who did more than any other British geologist to revolutionise the current opinions, writing in 1827, calls 'running counter to the feelings and prejudices of the age,' 'an unfeeling disregard of the weakness of human nature;'[1] and so deeply rooted was this principle with him that long afterwards, in his work on the 'Antiquity of Man,' he abstained from giving any numerical estimate of what that antiquity might be; and only when pressed on the subject at London dinner-parties did he acknowledge that the time during which the human race had existed on this earth could not be less than fifty thousand years.[2] Richard Owen, who scoffed at the Scriptural narrative of the creation in private, even when talking to an orthodox clergyman, observed a similar reticence in his publications, censuring Darwin for his outspokenness, and posing as an opponent of Natural Selection, while making no secret of his agreement with it in conversation.[3]

Yet Lyell, at any rate, chafed under this degrading subservience to the ignorant bigotry of Protestant England, so much more narrow-minded than papal Rome,[4] and welcomed every sign of the approaching deliverance from its yoke. In his letters, better perhaps than in any other series of documents, we can trace the growth of emancipation. In 1829 he records the payment of five hundred guineas for a work 'to prove the Mosaic cosmogony, and that we (the geologists) ought all to be burned in Smithfield.'[5] Shortly afterwards he complains that 'Moses and his penal deluge' have prevented certain most significant alluvial phenomena in the Roman Campagna from being used to throw new light on the earth's recent history.[6] A better state of feeling—due perhaps to the Reform agitation—sets in with the great year 1830. 'It is,' he announces, 'just the time to strike at'[7] the Mosaic cosmogony. And strike he did, with a vengeance, though using smokeless and noiseless

[1] 'Life,' Vol. I., pp. 173–4.

[2] Bain's 'Practical Essays,' p. 275.

[3] 'Life of Fenton Hort,' Vol. I., p. 431. Afterwards in conversation with Stillman he expressed himself more positively.

[4] 'Life,' Vol. I., p. 240.

[5] P. 238. [6] P. 240. [7] P. 271.

powder, by the publication of his epoch-making 'Principles of Geology,' and inaugurating the uniformitarian theory.

According to Lyell, no deluges, or cataclysms of any kind, of greater intensity than the floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslips, and so forth, which we still experience, need be assumed to explain the history of the earth's crust through the whole of geologic time. A different distribution of land and water, or a difference of some thousands of feet in the height of particular mountain-chains, would explain the vicissitudes of climate attested by changes in the flora and fauna of the same regions during the lapse of ages. Similarly with the upheaval and depression of continents and mountain-chains: no more is necessary to produce these vast changes than such movements of the land as we now see constantly going on. The doctrine of special creations is still upheld; and so far the new argument of natural theology remains unshaken; but the process, according to Lyell, is very gradual, and may be going on still for aught we know to the contrary; there is no real evidence of those wholesale clearances and fresh peoplings of the earth's surface in which contemporary geology delighted, and which the French school long continued to uphold.

Lyell is now generally considered to have overstated his case. Uniformitarianism, as he conceived it, left out of account forces which are not now operative, or operative only to a slight degree, but which there is good reason for believing to have been formerly much more active, and to have played a great part in the formation of the earth's crust. There have been revolutions and catastrophes in the history of man's dwelling-place as in the history of man himself. And here, as elsewhere, evolution has had a beginning and will have an end—events not contemplated by the uniformitarian philosophy. But as regards the vital point of the controversy, the British geologist was right. What he really fought against was the doctrine of discontinuity, of sudden and inexplicable changes suggesting the necessity of supernatural intervention before things could resume their normal course. Without himself accepting the transformation of species,[1] he made it a more credible theory by

[1] That is to say, before Darwin. Even after Darwin Lyell felt a great repugnance to accepting the simian origin of man. In religion he seems to

removing what had once seemed the insuperable obstacles opposed to the gradual transition from one organic type to another.

If, as we are told, Lyell's opinions 'caused some alarm,'[1] the alarm seems to have subsided quickly enough. In fact the same extreme stupidity that made pietists pin their faith on the disjointed mythology falsely ascribed to a more or less problematic Hebrew legislator, also made them blind to the logical consequences of the new interpretation of nature. The author of the 'Principles of Geology' worked on unmolested, exercising little influence except on a few kindred spirits, and extending the same well-bred forbearance as before to the popular superstitions, but privately grumbling at the belief in the Mosaic deluge as 'an incubus on our science,'[2] or indulging in a quiet smile at the large sale of Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise. In the early forties he grows restive over the exclusion of science from Oxford by the Puseyites,[3] and the clerical monopoly of education everywhere.[4] Then suddenly come tidings of promised deliverance from a quarter whence it could least have been hoped—

'via prima salutis,
Quod minime reris, Graia pandetur ab urbe.'

At Oxford itself a liberal and rationalist school is springing up. And the rationalists are at no pains (like us in London) to conceal their opinions. 'In large parties men are holding forth about the religious instinct, like the Greek instinct for form, which enabled the Jews to develop Judaism and Christianity.'[5] As a consequence of this altered tone, editions of the Fathers, after having been run up to fancy prices in the previous decade, are now a drug in the market, although there is still some demand for them at Cambridge.[6] A year later, 'public opinion is rapidly strengthening, but the clerical influence arrayed against all progressive science, whether

have been a Unitarian, and the foremost Unitarians were not at first favourable to evolution.

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 296.
[2] P. 328.
[3] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 82.
[4] Pp. 84–5.
[5] P. 114 (1846).
[6] An incidental proof of Oxford's primacy in freethought at that time.

physical or literary, is too powerful to be easily overcome.'[1] Finally, in 1851, professors are publishing the most unorthodox views, for entertaining or confessing which they would have been sent to Coventry ten years before.[2] Evidently something had been done for the emancipation of science that science could not do for herself.

We have now to consider what was the cause of this sudden revolution, or rather to what convergence of influences it can be traced back; and how long the process of gestation had been progressing before the new spirit came to its birth.

Those whose philosophy consists in referring every important change to the intervention or the withdrawal of some commanding personality, will no doubt make Newman's secession from the Church of England responsible for this weakening of the faith. Unfortunately for their theory the change had begun some years before that event; and if Newman had remained true to his early convictions things would probably have run much the same course as that which they actually followed. Already in 1840 he had declared rationalism to be the great evil of the day; and his only remedy for it was that appeal to authority which was his chief reliance at all times, whether without or within the Roman fold. But authority had neutralised itself by the division of Christianity into Churches, and of the Church of England into parties. Hence ensued a deadlock out of which there was no escape but by the exercise of reason; and to reason accordingly men had recourse.

Another easy explanation is supplied by the familiar idea of a reaction. The Tractarian movement had been a reaction against Evangelicalism, and so the time was come for a rationalistic reaction against the teaching of Keble and Newman. In point of fact, however, it does not appear that people get tired of holding the same opinions; on the contrary, the difficulty is to get them to adopt new ones. Nor is it true that each succeeding generation feels bound to reverse the judgments of its predecessors. If anything the tendency is rather to develop them. In this instance the younger men went further on the same path, carrying Newman along with them, while the other early supporters of the movement remained true to their

[1] P. 127 (1847). [2] P. 172.

Anglican principles. And at the same time Arnold's pupils were pushing his conclusions to a more advanced stage of rationalism. In any case, to talk about reaction would be to restate the fact, not to explain it. The question is how those liberal tendencies which had been violently arrested ten years before were enabled to break loose and finally to triumph in the struggle for the possession of English thought.

As in the seventeenth century, English liberty triumphed through the help of foreign allies. While literature lay 'tranced in golden languors,' or tossing in feverish dreams, or playing with idle fancies, or aping outworn fashions, or consuming itself in a 'scorn that became self-scorn,' while science was being bribed or terrified into servile acquiescence with the reigning superstition, the philosophy and criticism of Scotland, Germany, and France came to awaken, to reorganise, and to rearm them for the fight. To understand how this was done we must turn aside for a brief space to glance at the great intellectual events which were happening elsewhere.

In a former chapter we followed the course of religious thought in Germany up to the dawn of the nineteenth century, breaking off at the moment when the renewed interest in religion was showing itself by numerous conversions to the Roman Catholic Church. This reactionary movement in theology went hand in hand with the great Romanticist movement in literature, which was of a far more pronouncedly mediaeval character than the contemporary current in Great Britain. For, as we have seen, the romanticism associated with the works of Sir Walter Scott simply meant interest in a life of adventure, and in the countries or historical epochs when adventurous freedom becomes more possible than in ordinary civilised society, and had absolutely nothing to do with a sentimental wish for the restoration of feudal Catholicism, or rather ran counter to its restraints. Moreover, the secular traditions of English history were such as to inculcate an implacable hostility, fully shared by Scott, to the pretensions of papal Rome, that is to the strongest bond of Catholic unity; while Germany had glorious memories associated with the Holy Roman Empire of the German people, an empire only made possible by its unification under the Catholic faith.

German romanticism first began in adhesion to the subjective philosophy of Fichte,[1] a system whose bearings on theology have been defined in the chapter already referred to. But the romantic school at the time of its full development and supremacy over German thought had broken off from this first connexion, and had become associated much more intimately with the system of Fichte's successor on the philosophical throne, with the pantheism of Schelling. What this erratic genius had in common with the romantic leaders was at one time a most exaggerated estimate of the place held by art and aesthetic culture among the things of the spirit, and at all times a predilection for short cuts to truth, a disposition to substitute strained, mostly fanciful analogies for truly scientific generalisations.[2]

Schelling counts in the history of modern philosophy, and more particularly of German philosophy, as the founder of absolutism, of the doctrine that all nature constitutes a single indivisible whole, that knowledge is not of mere appearances, but of things as they are, that subject and object, so far from being separated by an impassable chasm, are, in fact, identical. It is not necessary to trouble the reader with an account of the process by which this position was reached; indeed he will be much better able to understand what follows by agreeing to treat it as an arbitrary and not particularly intelligible assumption, a piece of romantic wilfulness flung out in the dark at the problem of speculation. For that is just how Hegel conceived it;[3] and it is with Hegel, not with Schelling, that we are interested in the present connexion.

Older and more slowly matured than his brilliant friend and fellow-student Schelling, this greatest of German systematic thinkers owed his intellectual training chiefly to the schools of Athens, his standards of art to the Attic drama, his ideals of life to the Greek city-state. He was a Hellenist like Goethe and Schiller, but his Hellenism rested more firmly than theirs on a first-hand study of the antique, and resulted in a far deeper intelligence of its meaning. His immediate master was Aristotle; but he pushed the pretensions of reason much

[1] This is well brought out in Haym's 'Romantische Schule.'
[2] See Noack's 'Schelling und die Romantik.'
[3] Preface to the 'Phänomenologie des Geistes.'

further than Aristotle, further even than Proclus or Spinoza. The universe, he tells us, is penetrable to thought; it *is* thought, is reason, has, so to speak, argued itself out into the minutest details of its actual structure. Our best wisdom is to follow the process imitatively, to rethink the great thought of creation, with the clear consciousness that in so doing we not only repeat but complete it. To conceive the outer world as existing in possible isolation, independent of ourselves, would be a false abstraction. For to *be* truly and completely is to be self-conscious, self-possessed; and that is what the universe becomes through our knowledge of it and of ourselves as one with it. The Absolute is mind (Geist), the self-thinking thought of Aristotle; but not isolated as Aristotle's God seems to be; rather the last outcome of the cosmic process, the true Infinite which has no limit because it recognises what is without it as itself, as a necessary stage in its arrival at self-consciousness. Schelling was right when he identified object and subject, the knower and the known, wrong when he spoke of their indifference. The subjective is intrinsically higher than the objective; and this truth gives us back the idea of progress, makes progress possible. Self-realisation is the end of becoming.

Schelling, for all his identification and equilibration of subject and object, did not make knowledge coextensive with Being. Idea, in his philosophy, does not go without a remainder into fact. There is a mysterious incognisable ground of things, an unaccountable spontaneous outbreak of the primordial Will. Coleridge either adopted this view or discovered it independently for himself.[1] Hegel, on the other hand, is a pure intellectualist. The mainspring of his system is neither will nor any other dynamic principle, but logical contradiction;—not, as has been ignorantly asserted, a self-contradiction calmly assumed and acquiesced in as the ultimate secret of things, but the inconsistency arising from an incomplete statement of the truth, by which thought is ever urged on to widen and deepen its view, to create a higher synthesis where contradictories are reconciled. In this he follows the

[1] He certainly had read Schelling's treatise 'Ueber die Freiheit,' as the notes printed by Sara Coleridge in the second edition of her father's 'Biographia Literaria' prove.

drift of all German speculation, but gives it, for the first time, a fully elaborated logical expression.

What has been said of Schelling may here be repeated, with a difference, of his great rival. It is not to be expected or desired, but rather the contrary, that a reader otherwise unversed in Hegel's dialectic should fancy that he understands all about it from so summary an account of its nature. The master himself would have said that his system only became intelligible through its application, through its manifested power to carry order into our scattered conceptions, ranging them in one comprehensive and luminous whole. Schelling derided this pretension to prove all things as a new scholasticism, an intolerable pedantry. But it gave Hegel a hold over German thought such as he never possessed; and however repulsive may be the master's own exposition, his followers, both in Germany and England, have, with few exceptions, been distinguished for the lucidity and even for the grace of their style.

Hegelianism only interests us through its connexion with religion; but that is just the side on which it formerly exercised the most powerful influence in Germany, and continues to exercise it in England. Hegel was himself a student of theology in youth, and seems to have been gradually led on from it to the wider fields of free scientific speculation.[1] He liked definite dogmatic statements, definiteness combined with subtlety being indeed a note of his intellect; and he also liked the theologian's assumption of incontrovertible authority. It represented, he thought, in another order, the demonstrated certainties of philosophy. But, while professing himself a good Lutheran, he did not, in truth, retain a single vestige of religious belief. While criticising the shallowness of eighteenth-century rationalism, he considered that it had done a good and necessary work. At an early age he followed Schelling in rejecting all supernaturalism, and, unlike Schelling, he never took up with it again. His philosophy explains how all forms of religion arose, and what they meant for humanity; but it is independent of them all. He calls Christianity the absolute religion; but

[1] This is well brought out in Mr. Baillie's work on the history of Hegel's Logic.

that is merely because its dogmas supply him with a figurative representation of his own pantheistic conceptions, and that only under a Protestant form. As to Catholicism, he pronounces it incompatible with any rational constitution of the State.[1]

Hegel has been reproached with want of patriotism in the first part of his career as a teacher in South Germany, and with want of political liberality in the second part as a professor at Heidelberg and Berlin. He sided with the anti-national tyranny of Napoleon, and he sided with the oppressive bureaucracy of the Restoration. There is truth in both charges; yet throughout he was the consistent, if mistaken, advocate of civilisation against barbarism, or at least what he considered to be such. For our interest it is far more important to remember that on all occasions he stood for reason as against tradition and mysticism, for the practical against the sentimental, for the classic against the romantically mediaeval spirit, for Protestantism against Catholicism, for the modern State against feudal revivals. If he exposed with merciless sarcasm the superficiality and conceit of rationalistic criticism, this was because it missed the historical meaning and justification of what the rationalists called superstition, while they substituted for it the more abstract but more senseless superstition of a God divorced from nature, his contempt for the orthodox apologists with their historical evidences of Christianity was at least equally strong.

Years before the cholera carried him off at Berlin, Hegel had been a name of power at his own old university of Tübingen, where the most ardent students read his Phenomenology together on Sundays, and came to a consciousness of the radical difference between its idealism and the orthodox Protestantism of their official teachers. Of this band the most courageous and consistent was David Strauss. With him Hegelianism returned to its theological starting-point, and to the life of Jesus as the centre of theology. That life, as we find it recorded in the Gospels, is a religious legend filled with miraculous events; and philosophy had long since declared that miracles did not happen, with a recurring tendency to insist that they could not happen. Deists held that such

[1] 'Philosophie der Geschichte,' p. 538.

events would be violations of God's own laws, and atheists held that as nothing existed outside nature, nothing could interfere with the sequence of physical cause and effect. And a Hegelian who believed that all reality was a process determined by a necessity equal to that of syllogistic reasoning, could as little admit any deviation from its eternal order.

How, then, were the Gospel miracles to be explained? By imposture or literary fiction, said the anti-Christian rationalist. But this view could not be maintained in the face of that more sympathetic interpretation of religion which the modern spirit, especially as understood by the romantic school, had introduced. Least of all could the advocates of a liberal and enlightened Christianity maintain it. Accordingly they tried to show that the so-called miracles were really natural occurrences, misinterpreted either by those who witnessed and related them, or by those who heard the relations, as interferences with the course of nature. Of this school the chief representative was Paulus, a theological professor at Heidelberg, who went through the Gospel narratives with intrepid pedantry, explaining all their marvellous incidents from the birth to the ascension of the Saviour as perfectly consistent with the known laws of causation. His view seems to have held the field when Strauss took up the subject of Gospel criticism.

A consistent Hegelian necessarily regarded miracles as impossible, both for the philosophical reason already given, and, apart from that, because he neither believed in a personal God nor in a disembodied spirit of any kind. So far Strauss agreed with the rationalists. Nor was there anything in Hegel's idealism to prevent his accepting the theory of Paulus, had it been intrinsically credible. This, however, it was not; so he looked round for another explanation, and found it in the mythic theory. His use of the word myth seems to have popularised it in literature and even in common conversation, but without the technical meaning attached to it in his great work, the 'Life of Jesus.' By a myth Strauss understands the embodiment of a general idea in an imaginative story; and the Gospel miracles in particular are, according to him, concrete representations of the Messianic idea. Before Jesus was born, a general notion had obtained wide currency respecting the mighty works destined to be performed by the Messiah in

attestation of his divine mission; and these anticipations were constructed on the model of the miraculous narratives in the Hebrew Scriptures, or of the predictions which the Deliverer was bound to fulfil. In short, the whole Messianic legend had been constructed beforehand; it only needed a sufficiently imposing personality to win the confidence of some enthusiastic followers, and the life of Christ, as we have it, would in no long time be related and believed. That personality was supplied by Jesus of Nazareth, whose historical existence the new critic never for a moment doubted.

Strauss put forward his views in a clear and elegant style, which, together with the novelty of the mythic theory and the profound scholarship displayed in his work, at once won for it a wide circulation, even among the general public, for whom it was not originally intended. But what gave the work such far-reaching efficacy was not its positive theory about the origin of the Gospel-history, never very satisfactory, and subsequently abandoned in great part by the author himself. What really interested people was the destructive criticism of the miraculous narratives, chiefly carried on by an exposure of the inconsistencies shown by the evangelists in relating the same occurrence, or of the doubt cast on some by the silence of others about what ought to have been equally known and of equal importance to all, if it had really happened. With few exceptions Strauss has no need to fall back on the *a priori* argument against miracles. Even if the Gospels told nothing but what was consistent with ordinary experience, they could hardly be accepted as historical.

There was perhaps nothing new in any single criticism offered by Strauss; but the difficulties raised by previous enquirers had never before been brought together with such comprehensive erudition or marshalled with such controversial ability—an ability all the more effective because the writer's passionate hostility to supernatural religion masks itself under the appearance of cool scientific impartiality. Yet, even with such recommendations, a work of pure negation would hardly have made its way, hardly have caught the ear of the general public, hardly even have been undertaken by the author himself. The liquid solvent had to be conveyed in a solid capsule of constructive theory if it was to be absorbed by the general body

of European thought. A somewhat similar phenomenon, as will be remembered, was witnessed in the first half of the eighteenth century, when rationalism only gained a hearing by allying itself with natural religion, and in general with the fashionable worship of nature, to which revealed religion was opposed as the invention of an interested priesthood. Apologists have been much admired for attacking the tutelary and provisional husk; but by the time they had succeeded in stripping it off, the inner core of reason had escaped, and was propagating itself under other protective integuments.

Nor was it the mythic theory alone which, as a positive principle, made the fortune of Strauss's book. His adhesion to Hegel's philosophy counted perhaps for more, at least in Germany. Hitherto Hegelianism had passed for a bulwark of established creeds and institutions, just as Coleridge's teaching passed in England, and with the further advantage of winning full official recognition from Altenstein, the Prussian Minister of Public Instruction, who silenced Hegel's opponents and packed the university with his supporters. It now appeared that, in theology at least, the authorities had been doing the work of their most dangerous enemies. And the surprise was all the more disagreeable because outside the school an orthodox reaction, made much of by Pusey in his reply to Rose, had been going on for several years, against which Strauss's 'Life of Jesus' raised a powerful though indirect protest, striking as it did at the very heart of the position with the combined momentum of the higher criticism and the higher speculation. For, while professing to replace the exploded historical basis of Christian dogma by a profounder philosophical basis, the young Hegelian is in reality offering his master's evolution of nature from pure thought, and of spirit, incarnate in man, from the outer world, as a substitute for the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. The real secret of Hegel had been told, and could never again be hushed up. Once more, as all through the past, philosophy had issued in the negation of religious belief.

Like all the brilliant young writers who formed with him what he called the Hegelian Left, Strauss subsequently discarded, or rather let fall, the master's philosophy, content simply to put himself in line with the progressive culture and science of the age. Like the mythic theory, it had served as a

scaffolding under cover of which the work of demolition went on; nor could its removal restore the ruined edifice of faith.

No fact in the history of thought is more remarkable than the late introduction of Hegel into England. Professional students of German philosophy seem to have long remained ignorant even of his name. Coleridge, although he had looked into Hegel's 'Logic,' and perhaps took some hints from its general method,[1] never mentions his name, nor does Carlyle or De Quincey, both of whom knew something about Schelling. Pusey met Hegel at Berlin, but says nothing about him in discussing the relation of German thought to religion.[2] Sir William Hamilton, writing in 1827, refers to his 'Logic' with ignorant contempt, and never seems to have acquired a first-hand acquaintance with any of his works. Julius Hare has one quotation from the 'Philosophy of Law' and another from the 'Aesthetics' in his contributions to the 'Guesses at Truth.'

Probably most people began their studies in German literature by reading Madame de Stael,[3] who collected her materials before Hegel's star had risen above the horizon; and, owing to the general prevalence of romanticism in Europe, their attention was chiefly given to the school against which Hegel's philosophy was a standing protest. Heinrich Heine complained that in France a thoroughly false estimate of his countrymen had been produced by Madame de Stael, whose book on Germany gave them the impression that the Germans were a dreamy, sentimental, unpractical race, with strong, if rather undefined, religious beliefs. Heine had himself the advantage of some training in the school of Hegel, carrying away from it a sense of reality, and a recognition of the same sense in others, which he endeavoured, but without success, to impress on his French readers as a characteristic of the German genius. Above all, he pointed out how radically subversive of the commonly accepted theism German philosophy was, and had been since Kant.

In England the revelation of this other more formidable Germany seems to have begun with Strauss's 'Life of Jesus,'

[1] *Supra*, p. 261.
[2] Liddon's 'Life of Pusey,' Vol. I., p. 158.
[3] 'Life of F. D. Maurice,' Vol. I., p. 176.

through which Hegel also must have become more generally known. In default of ampler materials we can gather some notion of the effect produced from the correspondence of John Sterling. It may perhaps be remembered that Sterling's name stands in the list of gifted young men who were swept into the Christian ministry by that great wave of religious excitement which deluged the educated classes during the quarter century after the conclusion of the French war. Sterling has gained a curious sort of celebrity from his having been made the subject of a biographical masterpiece by Carlyle; and it remains a literary problem why he should have been deemed worthy of that honour by a critic whose judgment of much greater writers than this young journalist was scornful in the extreme. It must be remembered, however, that others besides Carlyle, and differing widely from him in character and opinions, received as deep an impression from Sterling's personality. Wordsworth, Julius Hare, and Caroline Fox were among his admirers. Mill was more attached to him than he ever was to any other man. Evidently his full powers were only shown in conversation, an art which the example of Coleridge had led the young men of that period to estimate far above its real value, and to cultivate with corresponding zeal. Much of his talent was wasted on fiction, for which he had no genuine vocation, and on poetry, for which he was still less fitted. Years were wasted before he found his way to a strong and sincere method of thinking, and when at last it seemed in sight the blind fury with the abhorred shears came to slit his thin-spun thread. But his delicate intellectual sensitiveness, combined with a moral courage rare among his contemporaries, makes Sterling a valuable index of the change through which English thought was passing when the Tractarian movement came to an end.

At Cambridge Sterling had, Carlyle thinks, 'frankly adopted the anti-superstitious side of things.' If not exactly a Benthamite, he fully shared Bentham's hostility to the Church of England.[1] He next comes under Coleridge's influence, and learns to think that 'Faith is the highest Reason;' but also reads the 'Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit' in manuscript with 'delight and sympathy,' finding the restricted view of

[1] 'Life of Sterling,' p. 36.

inspiration there set forth quite compatible with Anglican Christianity. After a variety of romantic adventures and desultory occupations, he, as I have said, is swept into the Church, as many others were, by the enthusiasm of the hour, and throws himself with ardour into parish work as Julius Hare's curate at Hurstmonceaux. Incapacitated by illness in less than a year, he plunges into theological studies, still retaining his liberal orthodoxy for a considerable period, planning 'Discourses on Revelation' and a 'Treatise on Ethics.' Schleiermacher and the Germans generally are helpful, but he cannot reconcile himself to their low opinion of the Old Testament. At the same time the more he studies it the more doubtful he becomes about 'the great physical miracles.'[1] But the continuity of Christianity with Judaism stands fast.

Like Coleridge and Newman, Sterling is chiefly impressed, though perhaps less oppressed, by the idea of sin and the consequent necessity of redemption. Milman has overlooked this (more probably did not believe in it); and two friends, one of whom is Carlyle, are painfully deficient in their appreciation of its importance. 'The defect of Mr. Dundas's theology, compounded as it is of the doctrine of the Greek Fathers, of the Mystics, and of ethical philosophers, consists, if I may hint a fault in one whose holiness, meekness, and fervour would have made him the beloved disciple of him whom Jesus loved, in an insufficient apprehension of the reality and depth of sin.' 'I find in all my conversations with Carlyle that his fundamental position is the good of evil; he is for ever quoting Goethe's epigram about the idleness of wishing to jump off one's shade. This is of course very closely connected with Pantheism, and also with the dusky glare of discontent which pervades Carlyle's whole mind.'[2]

Increasing uncertainty about the earlier portions of the Old Testament compels him to throw aside what he has written on the subject; but Christianity has lost none of its value in his eyes, and he reads Schleiermacher with increased satisfaction.[3] German religion represents the matured mind of Paul and John better than English religion.[4] Schleiermacher is on the whole

[1] Hare's 'Memoir,' prefixed to Sterling's 'Miscellaneous Writings,' p. lxi.
[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. lxxiii.–iv.
[3] P. xcv.
[4] P. xcvii.

the greatest spiritual teacher he has ever fallen in with. Thirlwall's 'Greece' and Carlyle's 'French Revolution' are the two greatest histories in the English language. Thirlwall and Carlyle make a rather ill-assorted pair; but one sees in these candid preferences of Sterling's how the Coleridgean insincerity is being burned away, partly by Hellenic rationality, partly by the revolutionary hatred of shams which it was Carlyle's office to revive as against romanticist illusions.

In the following year (1838) Sterling's Hellenism is shown still more explicitly by a rapturous panegyric on Socrates in an article on Montaigne contributed to Mill's 'London Review.' A winter at Rome probably increased the growing hatred for shams, especially those arising from religious self-delusion. Some time before he had spoken of Frank Edgeworth's return from Italy as 'a happy thing,' because he would not there have 'gained any intuition into the reality of Being, as different from a mere power of speculating and perceiving.' This seems rather hard on the country of Rosmini; but Sterling must have come to see that if some realities were concealed by the ritualism and imposture of Italian priestcraft, other realities revealed themselves through the beauty of Italian art and Italian scenery. Amid these surroundings he learned, apparently for the first time, to appreciate the full greatness of Goethe, whom he used to vilify; and this discovery again brought him nearer to Carlyle, of whom we have an enthusiastic but discriminating criticism from Sterling's pen written at Clifton in the decisive summer of 1839.

Decisive I call it, for it was there that he read Strauss's 'Life of Jesus' in German. With how much agreement our authorities do not state, but evidently with the keenest zest. 'Exceedingly clever and clear-headed,' he calls it in a letter to Carlyle, 'and less of destructive rage than I expected. It will work deep and far in such a time as the present. When so many minds are distracted about the history or rather genesis of the Gospels, it is a great thing for partisans on the one side to have, what the other have never wanted, a Book of which they can say, this is my Creed and Code—or rather Anti-Creed and Anti-Code. And Strauss seems perfectly secure against the sort of answer to which Voltaire's critical and historical shallowness perpetually exposed him. . . . It seems admitted

that the orthodox theologians have failed to give any sufficient answer.'[1]

Writing to Julius Hare, who watched with horror his young friend's growing perversion, Sterling very justly dwells on Strauss's recognition of the close connexion between the Old Testament and the Gospel, a recognition quite wanting to Schleiermacher's theology. But what had once buoyed up the Old Testament now dragged down the New. As a graver symptom still, Hare tells us that Strauss's Hegelian philosophy, which would have been repulsive to most English readers, was an attraction to Sterling. Not that he ever studied Hegel; but his early intercourse with Coleridge had prepared him to assimilate just that summary of the Hegelian philosophy of religion which is given at the close of the 'Life of Jesus.' Already in the essay on Carlyle he mentions 'those wondrous philosophers from Kant to Hegel'—a series now familiar but then quite novel. And he now assures Hare, quite in the Hegelian spirit, that the destruction of the Gospel history as an evidence of Christianity 'leaves the ideas of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the offices of the Spirit precisely where they were.'[2] But he does not seem to have worked out this vein of thought any further; and his letters soon cease to show any personal interest in the Church. His sympathies are with the leaders of the humanist movement, Mill, Carlyle, and Francis Newman. 'What we are going *to*,' he is quoted as saying, 'is abundantly obscure; but what we are going *from* is very plain.'[3]

It is worth noting that in these last years Sterling took up geology as a study, but apparently without the least idea of a conflict between science and theology. Deliverance or perdition —by whichever name we are to call the final parting with faith—came not from science, but from literature and philosophy.

In Sterling's life the new method of make-believe in religion, the deliberately insolent identification of faith with conscientiousness, had been tested on its chosen ground and had signally failed. Coleridge's answer to the question, how can Christianity be proved? had been 'TRY IT. It has been eighteen hundred

[1] Carlyle's 'Life of Sterling,' pp. 187–8.
[2] 'Memoir,' cxxxix. [3] Carlyle, p. 222.

years in existence: and has one individual left a record like the following: "I tried it and it did not answer. I made the experiment faithfully according to the directions; and the result has been a conviction of my credulity"? Have you in your own experience met with any one, in whose words you could place full confidence, and who has seriously affirmed: "I have given Christianity a fair trial. I was aware that its promises were made only conditionally. But my heart bears me witness that I have to the utmost of my power complied with these conditions. Both outwardly and in the discipline of my inward acts and affections I have performed the duties which it enjoins, and I have used the means which it prescribes. Yet my assurance of its truth has received no increase. Its promises have not been fulfilled, and I repent of my delusion"?'[1]

The very instance so carefully specified had been found, and found among Coleridge's own disciples. Nor did it tell against Coleridge alone. Newman had asked those wretched persons who trusted their own sight and reason more than the words of God's Ministers, why, if they trusted their senses and their reason, they did not trust their conscience too. And he answers for them: 'It is because they love sin. But if we obey God's voice in our hearts we shall have no doubt practically formidable about the truth of Scripture. Find out the man who strictly obeys the law within him and yet is an unbeliever as regards the Bible, and then it will be time enough to consider all that variety of proof by which the truth of the Bible is confirmed to us.'[2] It was time to produce these proofs, for the hour and the man had come.

Sterling had more than fulfilled Coleridge's and Newman's conditions; for he had been a hard-working curate until his health broke down under the strain. And his friend Julius Hare had some inkling of the moral to be drawn as to the value of the parochial argument. But he is ready with the usual answer of all who vend or recommend quack remedies. The dose was not large enough. If Sterling had stayed on at Hurstmonceaux, he would have successfully resisted the infection of German criticism. Perhaps he would not have had time to read it. At any rate, what Hare says seems equivalent

[1] 'Aids to Reflection,' pp. 155–6.

[2] 'Parochial and Plain Sermons,' Vol. I., p. 201.

to an admission that the scholar as such is very likely to become an unbeliever, that the pursuit of truth for its own sake is fatal to faith. Indeed, he seems to go the length of implying that the cultivation of knowledge as speculation, and without a view to its practical value, is fatal even to knowledge itself. In illustration he refers to the Greek Sophists—a singularly unfortunate example, for it was just by their subordination of theory to practice that the Sophists were distinguished from the philosophers. And with equal infelicity he quotes the Schoolmen, who subordinated reason to faith, and valued faith as a means to salvation.

At a later period of this history we shall have to study the career of a higher and more ardent spirit even than Sterling's—the great historian, J. R. Green; and we shall see how in his case parish work, carried on not for months, but for years, resulted in an incredulity still more complete. *Porro unum necessarium.* Obedience to conscience and the performance of everyday duties are not enough to secure an unquestioning faith. Love of truth and sincerity have to be flung away as they were flung away by Coleridge, who, as Sterling told Caroline Fox, 'professed doctrines he did not believe in order to avoid the trouble of controversy.'[1]

Ethical ophelism is indeed a most inconvenient ally to irrational beliefs. A high standard of duty is apt to bring some regard for veracity in its train; and veracity discountenances the uncritical acceptance of certain propositions, when certain other propositions, resting on no worse evidence, are held to be legitimate subjects for examination. Thus the very movement which drew so many young men of high character and ability into the Church ultimately subjected her pretensions to an even severer scrutiny from within than from without.

Pietism among the higher and more educated classes in England—and among the pietists I include such types as Newman and Keble, Arnold and Hare, no less than William Wilberforce and Hannah More—pietism draws its strength and sustenance from the Puritan English middle class, Low Church or Evangelical Nonconformist. Through the eighteenth century this class had been rising into ever greater importance. Since

[1] Caroline Fox, 'Journals and Letters,' Vol. I., pp. 287-8.

the Reform Act of 1832 it had become, if not exactly supreme in the State, for that without education it could not be, at any rate the ultimate arbiter in all disputed questions, as well as the source of a vague but massive public opinion, continually exercising pressure on the legislature and the administration through the newspapers; and in no long time the repeal of the Corn Laws was to increase still further its power and prestige. Intellectually this class does not rank high; but it has strict notions of duty; and a larger proportion of its members can think and act for themselves than are to be found, at the same grade of culture, in any other European country. Thus it happened that while English scholars were slowly assimilating and reconciling themselves to the conclusions of German criticism, but were restrained by the terror of middle-class bigotry from making known their altered opinions, certain members of that very class, brought up in the strictest sect of Evangelicalism, were working out the same conclusions independently and by a much more summary process—with the determination also, when their convictions were settled, not to keep them concealed.

The first of whom we have a distinct record is Charles Bray, a Coventry ribbon-maker, now chiefly remembered from his association with the youth of George Eliot. Born in 1811, and placed, after a very imperfect education, in a London warehouse at seventeen,[1] he began by interesting himself in 'the opinions of the Greek philosophers,'[2] but was soon 'converted' or 'convinced of sin' by a Dissenting Evangelical doctor.[3] Returning to Coventry, young Bray meets an interesting Unitarian minister, tries to convince him of his errors, but finds the arguments against Trinitarianism unanswerable, goes on to question the story of the Fall, gives up freewill, and finally adopts phrenology, at that time in great vogue, as the most satisfactory of philosophies.[4] Marrying in 1836, he proceeds to convert his bride to freethought, and provides a few works of the French materialistic school for her to read on the wedding-tour, but at first 'only succeeds in making her exceedingly uncomfortable.'[5] Whatever else may be doubtful, young Mrs. Bray still believes devoutly in her brother, Charles

[1] 'Autobiography of Charles Bray,' p. 6.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 7.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Pp. 10 *sqq.*
[5] P. 48.

Hennell, and refers to him for a conclusive answer, so far at least as the Bible is concerned. Charles, an orthodox Unitarian, has been through it all, and refuses to reconsider the question, but is finally induced by Bray's philosophical arguments to go over the ground once more. This renewed examination results in a complete rejection of the supernatural on Hennell's part, and furnishes the materials for an 'Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity,' which caused a considerable sensation at Coventry and elsewhere.[1] Marian Evans's Evangelicalism, already undermined by Scott's novels, came down with a rush on reading it, leaving the way open for Strauss and Comte to enter in and take possession of her capacious intellect.[2]

Hennell's book passed through more than one English edition, but had otherwise no great success or influence on religious thought in this country. However, it received the honour of a German translation, with a highly eulogistic preface from the pen of Strauss. What most impressed the great German critic was the practical sagacity of the English writer. 'An Englishman, a merchant, a man of the world, he possesses both by nature and by training the practical insight, the sure tact, which lays hold on realities. The solution of problems over which a German flutters with many circuits of learned formulae, our English author often succeeds in seizing at one spring. To the learned he often presents things under a surprisingly new aspect; to the unlearned invariably under that which is most comprehensible and attractive.'[3]

Hennell, in short, bears somewhat the same relation to Strauss himself that Beaufort bears to Niebuhr. Without being much of a scholar, he sees what things are incredible, and he shows why they are incredible. Like Beaufort also, he exercised little or no effect on public opinion. Strauss noted the fact with surprise, and augured ill from it for the success of his own book in England. 'They would not listen,' he complains, 'to an Englishman addressing them in their own fashion, so how can they be expected to attend to a German?'[4] He did not know that on these questions our countrymen are not much

[1] P. 49.
[2] 'George Eliot's Life,' Vol. I., p. 102.
[3] Quoted in 'George Eliot's Life,' Vol. I., p. 102.
[4] Preface to the English translation of his 'Life of Jesus.'

impressed by what is called good plain sense. They demand, even more than the Germans, an immense display of learning, relevant or otherwise, a scaffolding of ambitious theories destined to speedy decay, a studied insolence in the treatment of opponents,—

'Right arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.'

If possible also a school, a chorus of voices, like what the Tractarians had raised. A collection of some half-dozen mediocre essays by as many different authors counts for many times more than one strong single-handed work.

Read in the light of modern criticism, Hennell chiefly impresses one by his extraordinary conservatism. An early date—between the years A.D. 68 and 70—is given to Matthew.[1] Mark wrote a little later, but is admitted to have been a disciple of Peter.[2] The third Gospel and the Acts are by Luke or Silas, a companion of Paul.[3] The greater part of the Fourth Gospel is admitted to have been written by the Apostle John about the year 97.[4] It seems important to notice this attitude of Hennell's on account of a misconception widely prevalent at the present day. Apologists are apt to assume that the credibility of the Gospels in their entirety would be saved if their traditional authorship by the men whose names they bear were established or not denied. And it is also assumed that the scholars who assign them to other authors and to a comparatively late date are actuated solely by a controversial interest. Their whole animus is thought to be directed against the miraculous element in Scripture; and as the evidence for miracles, and more particularly for the resurrection of Jesus, would be overwhelming were the First and Fourth Gospels to be accepted as the reports of eye-witnesses, every effort is made to invalidate such inconvenient attestations. And that is why the Higher Criticism has been called into existence. Its object is, by hook or by crook, to get rid of inconvenient facts. Study the Gospels like any other documents, and these artificial hypotheses will disappear.

If any such illusions still exist, the merest glance at Hennell's 'Inquiry,' or at any leading work of the older

[1] 'Inquiry,' p. 71.
[2] P. 83.
[3] P. 93.
[4] P. 108.

rationalistic literature, should suffice to dispel them. No doubt rationalism has been greatly strengthened by the progress of historical science, and its conclusions have gained a much wider acceptance through the disauthentication of various documents formerly accepted as the reports of credible eye-witnesses. But rationalism did not need that more advanced science to come into existence; nor would it cease to exist and flourish were those negative conclusions to be reversed. Similarly, the Higher Criticism is not a creation of the rationalists, nor has it been cultivated in the interests of rationalism. It has indeed tended to weaken the evidence for miracles. But this is just what might have been expected on the theory that miracles do not happen. It simply means that the nearer we get to the facts the less inconsistent with experience do they appear.

Besides the straightforward good sense of the English middle class, another characteristic closely allied with it deserves attention, namely their admirable sincerity. In both respects they offer a pleasing contrast to the superior persons from the universities, who, no doubt, would have looked down on them and their efforts after truth with immeasurable contempt. To pass from Coleridge and his disciples, or from Newman and his followers, to the Coventry group is to exchange a stifling hothouse for the open air. Charles Hennell is described by George Eliot as 'a model of moral excellence;'[1] and assuredly one sign of that excellence is to be found in the patient candour with which, to satisfy his sister's doubts, he went once more through the evidence for the truth of the Gospel history. No doubt there was a ludicrous side to Charles Bray's eager proselytism, especially as displayed on his wedding-tour; but it is less absurd than Keble's habitual reference to the ladies of his family as infallible authorities in religion;[2] and it contrasts favourably with the principle of economy as practised either at Highgate or at Oxford. Again, the conduct of Mrs. Bray[3] and of Marian Evans[4] in refusing to go to church when they had

[1] Bray's 'Autobiography,' p. 76.
[2] Kegan Paul's 'Biographical Sketches,' pp. 62–3.
[3] Bray's 'Autobiography,' p. 49.
[4] 'George Eliot's Life,' Vol. I., p. 104.

ceased to believe in Christianity seems to indicate a higher moral standard than Coleridge's professed adhesion to the Anglican system which his philosophy was destroying, or the pitiful sophistry by which Newman and Ward justified the retention of their position as ministers in a Protestant establishment while accepting the whole cycle of Roman doctrine. Even Dr. Arnold shows badly by comparison with his Warwickshire neighbours, when we find him at this very same period using his whole influence to make a young friend take orders under a pledge to repeat as true what they both believed to be false.[1] Arnold's lessons were not forgotten by his biographer; and their pernicious effect showed itself long afterwards when Stanley publicly rebuked Rowland Williams for letting the English laity know, what he himself knew to be a fact, that the Book of Daniel is a Maccabaean forgery.[2]

In view of possible misconceptions it may be desirable to explain more precisely what this contrast implies. General experience does not seem to prove that the commercial classes in England, or elsewhere, are more sincere and straightforward in formulating their convictions than the leisured and the learned classes, or that women have more moral courage than men. My own observations, so far as they go, rather incline me to the contrary opinion. But there seems good reason for thinking that on questions of religious belief the usual relations are reversed, and that heresies of every shade are proclaimed with more candour by a freethinking man of business, or by a woman in any class, than by those whose social standing or whose manhood should impose on them in honour a noble fearlessness in the confession of their creed. The solution of this paradox seems to be that the more liberally as compared with the less liberally educated classes, and men as compared with women, feel a greater responsibility for professions of unbelief just because they have been brought up to look on religious beliefs rather as safeguards to public virtue than as true in themselves; while, over and above this tender consideration for the welfare of others, they are in a state of vague terror as to

[1] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. II., p. 107; compare p. 151.

[2] In his article on 'Essays and Reviews' in the 'Edinburgh Review' for April, 1861.

what may happen to themselves personally if the superstitions of those more ignorant and irritable people are offended, especially were such feelings to be roused against them by their rivals in the favour of the ladies or of the populace. In Scotland religious dissimulation is perhaps more habitually sustained by the latter and more degraded motive: while in England that spirit of conciliation and regard for other people's susceptibilities, to which I have already drawn attention, brings about the same result.

Now, it is obvious that the classes to whom religion has been taught as true rather than as useful, when they come to think of it in part or whole as not true, will be withheld from continuing publicly to profess it as true by the ordinary motives which make for veracity. Or again, they may have a more or less unconscious sense of being, as those for whose sake it exists, the true seat of authority in religion, and therefore able to decree the revision or the abolition of its dogmas with more finality than any Council of the Church, being the rock—or the sand—on which it rests. They know at first hand, by direct introspection, how much or how little supernatural sanctions of morality may be worth. Mrs. Grundy herself is perhaps not the likeliest person to be affected by dread of public opinion.

Another noteworthy circumstance in this intellectual history of Coventry is the action of Unitarianism as a rationalistic ferment. Doubts were first roused in Charles Bray's mind by his controversy with a Unitarian minister; and Hennell, who had been bred a Unitarian, was more open to Bray's arguments than a Churchman at that time would have been. We shall see afterwards how powerfully Frederick Maurice's early Unitarian training operated in suggesting a new interpretation of the orthodox formularies, which has since been accepted in its essentials by the liberal High Church school. And in the second half of the nineteenth century, advanced Biblical criticism has been very largely introduced into England from the Continent by Unitarian divines.

Two years after the publication of Hennell's 'Inquiry' another work appeared, covering the same ground and pointing in the same direction. The author, an English Churchman, far exceeded Hennell in genius and learning, but was greatly

inferior to him in boldness, and perhaps in candour. If so, his weakness carried its own penalty with it, for the work to which long years of labour had been devoted was generally ignored by the clergy, produced no appreciable effect on English thought, and, although since reprinted, is now completely forgotten even by his warmest admirers. I refer to Milman's 'History of Christianity,' of which the first edition was published in 1840.

When we last met Milman, it was as the author of a 'History of the Jews,' which, it will be remembered, caused considerable scandal by introducing a certain tone of romanticism into religious literature, and what was more, religious literature intended for family reading. Since then liberal tendencies within the Church could do no more than hold their own against the obscurantist reaction known as Tractarianism. Fortunately, however, the English Government, whether carried on by Whigs or Tories, continued steadily anti-clerical, at least to the extent of regarding high ecclesiastical pretensions with dislike and suspicion. Lord Melbourne appointed Hampden to the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford, notwithstanding the furious protests of Newman and his associates. Lord John Russell promoted him to the See of Hereford. Melbourne also considered Thirlwall quite orthodox enough for the episcopal bench. Milman was made Canon of Westminster and Rector of St. Margaret's by Sir Robert Peel in 1835, and Dean of St. Paul's by Lord John Russell in 1849.

Of the three large volumes composing the 'History of Christianity,' the first is almost entirely filled with a life of Christ, preceded by an account of the antecedents of his religion and of the environment in which it arose. Without committing himself to any distinct theory, Milman practically treats the Gospels as human compositions, and Christianity itself, very much in the semi-rationalistic style of the eighteenth century, as a purely ethical religion with supernatural sanctions. This part seems to have been written before the appearance of Strauss's book; but the mythical theory is controverted in an appendix. Miracles are upheld, but rather feebly; and one is left doubtful as to whether the writer really believes in what he seems half ashamed to defend. Everything is done to put Christianity in line with the world's other great religions, and to exhibit it, quite in Hennell's style, as the spontaneous outgrowth of human

thought. Nevertheless, we are assured at the last moment that it must have been supernaturally revealed. Then it is suggested, in accordance with that very theory of accommodation so violently denounced by Rose in his attack on German rationalism, that the belief in miracles has been very serviceable to religion in the ages of ignorance, and therefore may have formed part of the providential order, even if the miracles themselves did not happen. But Christ's resurrection is expressly reserved. It really did happen, and was not a mere accommodation. The more illogical the compromise, the clearer evidence does it supply of an increasing pressure exercised by German on English thought.

Neither Evangelicals nor Tractarians were disposed to make their peace with rationalism on such terms. A writer on the Protestant side 'cautioned his readers against this most dangerous and insidious work.'[1] Newman wrote in private about it as a sort of earnest of the approaching battle between orthodoxy and infidelity. Publicly he dissected out its tendencies in a review contributed to the 'British Critic,' which for delicate urbanity and razor-like irony stands perhaps at the head of all his shorter essays.

Newman held what may be called a double-aspect view of history. All events are, like the sacraments, outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace. They have one value as phenomena, as links in the chain of natural causation, and quite another value as means for the accomplishment of a divine purpose. This, of course, is pure mysticism, and is duly acknowledged as such. Rationalism rejects it, and refuses to go beyond that about which alone agreement is possible—the fixed relations of things to one another. In the present instance, however, the principle concerns us less than its application. Newman employs it to nullify the theory of evolution as a method for eliminating the supernatural element in religion. Whatever first suggested that theory, for modern thought it began with the sciences of human nature, and worked its way down to purely material phenomena. German philosophy in particular had employed the idea of development on a great scale for the interpretation of man's spiritual history; and Milman, bred as he was in the romanticist school, had

[1] J. H. Newman's 'Essays, Critical and Historical,' Vol. II., p. 247.

followed in the steps of his German masters. On the other hand, Newman, with his mystical view, regards the evolutionary method as purely superficial, as accounting only for the external side, while leaving the inner meaning untouched. It is, he observes, as if a naturalist were to account for man as a whole by showing that physically he was descended from a brute. We must not ascribe this parallel to any remarkable prescience on Newman's part. For, not to mention Lamarck, the animal descent of man was an idea of Greek philosophy; and it is mentioned here as akin to an old Gnostic speculation quoted by Milman.[1] The illustration is used to show that rationalism gains nothing by tracing back this or that Christian dogma or practice to a heathen original, for such dogmas or practices acquire an altogether new meaning by their incorporation with the Catholic system as a whole. 'The doctrine of a Trinity is found both in the East and in the West; so is the ceremony of washing; so is the rite of sacrifice. The doctrine of the Divine Word is Platonic;[2] the doctrine of the Incarnation is Indian; of a divine kingdom is Judaic; of Angels and demons is Magian; the connexion of sin with the body is Gnostic; celibacy is known to Bonze and Talapoin; a sacerdotal order is Egyptian; the idea of a new birth is Chinese and Eleusinian; belief in sacramental virtue is Pythagorean; and honours to the dead are a polytheism.'[3] Milman is represented as arguing from all this—although he certainly never says so—'These things are in heathenism, therefore they are not Christian;' while his critic prefers to say, 'These things are in Christianity, therefore they are not heathen.'[4] And he proceeds to treat them as fragments of a primaeval revelation, seeds of truth scattered far and wide, which have grown up wild, but with real life in them. Thus the Church had a perfect right to go about collecting ideas from all quarters. 'She sits in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, claiming to herself what they said rightly, correcting their errors, supplying their defects, completing their beginnings, expanding their surmises, and thus gradually by means of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 193.

[2] This, I may observe, is an error, shared by Newman with many other theologians. The Logos is a Heracleitean and Stoic, not in the least a Platonic idea.

[3] Newman, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

[4] *Ibid.*

them enlarging the range and refining the sense of her own teaching.'[1]

Various interesting reflexions are suggested by the foregoing passage. In the first place Newman seems, within the compass of a few pages, to have vitally transformed the mystical theory with which he started. He admits that there is more than a merely superficial resemblance between Christian and heathen ideas. There is a parallel between the inner meaning and the outward appearance. Returning to the physiological illustration, not only is man's body derived from an undeveloped animal organism, but his reason is also derived from an undeveloped animal intelligence. Again there is a striking resemblance between this conciliatory method of Newman's in theology and the methods employed by two eminent contemporaries of his in philosophy and politics. I refer to the eclectic method of Victor Cousin, which professed to find good in every system, and to the parliamentary tactics of Sir Robert Peel, which consisted largely in carrying as a Minister the measures he had gained office by opposing. Cousin's flimsy synthesis soon went to pieces; Peel broke up his party twice over, and bequeathed the fatal habit of conservation by surrender to his successors. Newman charges Milman with speculations of such a kind that 'if we indulge them Christianity will melt away like snow in our hands; we shall be unbelievers before we at all suspect where we are.'[2] But is not this very like what is happening to Catholicism before our eyes under the hands of Newman's disciples: is it not 'melting away like snow'? By an ultimate irony of evolution the search for inward significance seems likely to leave nothing substantial or enduring but external continuity of form. The cathedral will become a more gorgeous freemasons' lodge for the celebration of mysteries which will have sunk into signs of recognition between adepts. The new Rome, like the old, will tolerate and embrace all religions; but, reversing the system of pagan assimilation, they will be to the vulgar equally false, to the philosopher equally true, and to the magistrate equally useless.

Newman was neither a philosophic theorist nor an accurate reasoner; but he retained a certain hold on reality; and the

[1] P. 232.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 242.

levity with which the distinction between fact and fiction has been treated by his followers would have filled him with dismay. Still he must be charged with having set them an example of reckless playing with fire. His review of Milman raises more difficulties than it settles, and indeed leaves the rationalistic argument from history practically unanswered. If Catholic theology as a whole was revealed to primitive man, why was so much of it lost by the chosen people, the race among whom revelation remained continuous, and a select class—or whatever Newman means by 'the Church' before there were any Apostles—existed for the guardianship of sacred tradition? If immortality became known to the Persians, not by primitive tradition but by special revelation, why was that revelation withheld from the Jews? And why was not the secret of monotheism communicated a little more liberally to those whom some capricious inspiration had favoured with a knowledge of the more mysterious Trinity? Such questions might be multiplied indefinitely; and they are more easily asked than answered in an orthodox sense.

A process of doctrinal evolution conducted by the Church is an illogical compromise between miracle and law, betraying the influence of a rationalistic environment on traditionalist methods. When so much has been surrendered to natural causes, they are certain to devour the Church herself at last; the more so that a corporate personality, possessing every attribute of intelligence except its liability to error, is itself the least credible of dogmas, and the most obviously derived from an abuse of words. It is, besides, dangerously suggestive of the completer view according to which no partial group of beings but the world as a whole possesses an organising intelligence which first reaches personality and the consciousness of its own absoluteness in the individual man. Thus, but thus alone, might the judgments of the *orbis terrarum* claim to be really fearless and final. Oxford was well prepared to find in the writings of Hegel, or of Comte, her true Tracts for the Times.

Rationalists also may find matter for profitable meditation in this suggestive essay of Newman's. At the very beginning of this work occasion was taken to point out that the famous historical argument is a less potent instrument for the destruction of erroneous beliefs than seems to be imagined at the

present day. Some readers may be surprised to find that its bearings were discussed sixty-five years ago, with less knowledge indeed than controversialists now possess, but with sufficient knowledge to justify a provisional conclusion. To show the origin of a belief is, as Newman observes, not enough to prove it false. At the same time he sees clearly enough wherein the real force of the historical method consists. It raises a question, he says, as to the *authority* of Revealed Religion. And to that question there is no answer provided. It is dismissed with a sneer. 'There is nothing very profound,' Newman remarks, about the objection that originality is necessary, if not for truth of doctrine, at least for evidence of divinity; and he 'merely mentions it that he may not seem to have forgotten it.'[1] Yet opinions freely borrowed and repeated without an acknowledgment of their source seem to require some stronger attestation of a divine origin than the mere word of the dogmatist, however dictatorial, or blustering, or contemptuous his utterances may be. Newman, like his Evangelical teachers, falls back in the last resort on the sense of sin and the evidence of miracles. We shall see hereafter how these two pillars of the faith were being undermined.

But before pursuing the course of rationalism as a gradual growth among the higher classes, I must turn aside to relate an episode symptomatic of the more violent spirit of revolt aroused by the pietistic reaction among a group of reformers, sprung from the working classes, in whom the theological radicalism of the later eighteenth century had allied itself with the political radicalism of the new age.

In his preface to the German translation of Hennell's 'Inquiry' Strauss had justly praised its earnest and dignified tone as compared with the 'ridicule and scorn' practised by 'his countrymen of the deistical school.' No doubt such a tone came naturally to the excellent young man; but it had the incidental advantage of saving him from a prosecution for blasphemy. There was much less freedom of speech permitted during the religious revival than when Woolston and Chubb wrote. Under the Liverpool administration Richard Carlile, the publisher, suffered years of imprisonment, besides heavy

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

fines, for selling the theological works of Thomas Paine. It is true that freethought had become associated with what respectable people called sedition, and that this was largely responsible for the new outbreak of persecution. But the governing classes could never have obtained power to deal such blows at the expression — even the intemperate expression — of religious opinion had they not been supported by a great and increasing amount of religious bigotry, even among political Liberals. James Mill never wrote against religion; yet Dr. Arnold, as we have seen, would gladly have sent him to Botany Bay. And this persecuting spirit follows very naturally from the notion that unbelief is the result of moral depravity, whether, as with Newman and Keble, it takes the extreme form of calling men wicked who question the infallibility of the Bible, or, as with Arnold, the attenuated form of calling disbelief in a personal God, 'the renunciation of obedience to God, of the sense of responsibility to him, which never can be without something of an evil heart rebelling against a yoke which it does not like to bear';[1] or of saying that 'he who has rejected God must be morally faulty, and therefore justly liable to punishment.'[2]

Arnold's words received a practical application, ten years after they were written, in certain prosecutions for blasphemy at Gloucester Assizes in August, 1842, followed by severe sentences on the parties indicted. One of the victims, Mr. G. J. Holyoake, has but recently ended an honourable career, dying universally respected for his lifelong efforts to improve the condition of the working-classes by schemes of practical philanthropy. Born at Birmingham in 1817, Mr. Holyoake received a religious education, was interested at an early age in foreign missions, taught at a Sunday-school, and wrote some pious verses which were inserted in the 'Baptist Tract Magazine.' At a time when his family were in great distress, and his little sister lay on her death-bed, an Easter-due was levied on them with merciless severity by the Rector of St. Martin's, a proceeding which raised some doubts in the boy's mind as to the utility of Church establishments.[3] But his speculative impulses seem never to have been very strong, and were easily satisfied by George Combe's phrenological system. Under the influence

[1] Stanley's 'Life of Arnold,' Vol. I., p. 259.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 260.

[3] 'Trial for Atheism,' p. 18.

of Robert Owen he became what was then called a Socialist. Owen and his disciples attacked religion, like the Benthamites, rather as an obstacle to social reform than on theoretical grounds. They published a magazine called the 'Oracle of Reason,' edited by one Southwell, 'youngest of thirty-six children,' who printed atheistic articles, and suffered fifteen months' imprisonment at Bristol in consequence. Holyoake was exasperated by this treatment of his friend, and as a result was led to adopt the same opinions. He had not long to wait for an opportunity to proclaim them. After delivering a lecture on Home Colonisation at Cheltenham, he was called to account by a local preacher for having left God out of his scheme. The challenge drew from him a declaration of disbelief in God's existence, and of abhorrence for religion as poisoning the fountain of morality. In the present state of distress the people were too poor to have a God; and as a measure of economy the lecturer would 'put the Deity on half-pay'; meaning that he would devote half the revenues of the Church to secular purposes.

For using these words Holyoake was prosecuted on a charge of blasphemy under the Common Law at Gloucester Assizes. He defended himself at great length on the ground that there are no valid arguments for the existence of a God; that it is impossible to blaspheme against what one does not believe in; that to talk about putting the deity on half-pay was a harmless way of expressing an opinion in itself perfectly lawful to hold; and that religious persecution ought to be discontinued. In this connexion the impunity granted to Strauss in Germany was mentioned as an example worthy of imitation.

Nearly the whole of these arguments were brushed aside by the judge as irrelevant. While maintaining that morality was impossible without belief in a God, he seemed to admit that anti-religious arguments and opinions were not fit subjects for prosecution, unless they were accompanied by indecent expressions calculated to excite contempt for religion among the people. The defendant had declared that he had no intention of bringing religion into contempt. But if so, he ought to have made use of other language. Such a charge left the jury no option but to return a verdict of guilty; and Holyoake was condemned to six months' imprisonment in Gloucester gaol.

It would appear that the distinction drawn by Judge Erskine between irreligious opinions themselves and the way in which they are expressed has no solid foundation in law or logic. Neither the Common Law nor the Statute Law makes any difference between decent and indecent attacks on Christianity. To deny the existence of God is not less blasphemous than to associate his name with ridiculous ideas, and leads much more surely to that abandonment of public worship which it is the object of government to prevent. In Holyoake's case the judge gave as a reason for making a difference between the two kinds of attack that 'you may answer sober arguments, but indecent reviling you cannot, and therefore the law steps in and punishes it.'[1] The assumption is not true; for indecent reviling can be answered by pointing out its indecency; and this is generally found to be the most effective kind of retort. But admitting its validity, the principle would prove too much, for then it ought to be applied impartially in every case, or at any rate in every case of religious controversy, which notoriously is not done, indecent attacks on the doctrines and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church not being punishable by law, although to a large proportion of British subjects they are as offensive as expressions about putting the deity on half-pay could be to any one at Cheltenham. That the law should interfere on behalf of one religion only shows its animus, or the animus of its administrators, shows the intention of putting down criticism on certain opinions which the governing classes consider true and useful, or rather too useful to admit the possibility of their being untrue.

Mr. Holyoake's arrest and preventive imprisonment were accompanied by circumstances of such lawless brutality that his case was brought before Parliament by Roebuck, and the Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, interfered to protect him against the local authorities. Otherwise no public attention was drawn to the case, nor is it mentioned in any modern history of England. Yet opinions about theism practically identical with those professed at the Cheltenham meeting were shortly to find their way into the highest circles of Oxford culture. It is true that they were introduced in a much

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

more circuitous fashion as incidental accompaniments or consequences of new philosophical systems, and so far gave less offence; while at the same time they were more akin to the transitional genius of the age. Owen and his disciples represented a direct tradition from the eighteenth century and the Revolution. Their less outspoken contemporaries stood rather for a compromise between the religious restoration of the new era, and what we call its romanticism, on the one hand, and the complete negations of Hume and the Encyclopaedists on the other. I have shown how this compromise embodied itself in Hegel's philosophy, and how that philosophy suddenly became known to Englishmen through Strauss's 'Life of Jesus.' But at the moment of Hegel's death another philosopher of more radical tendencies in politics, and more openly, if not more essentially, hostile to all theology, was preparing to take his place on the intellectual throne.

This was Auguste Comte, by general consent the greatest of French thinkers since Descartes, and in the judgment of some, of whom the present writer is one, superior even to Descartes. I propose to give some account of the system to which he owes so high a rank, and to define the influence which it exercised on the course of English rationalism. But the subject is of such great importance that it must be reserved for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER X

COMTE, CARLYLE, AND MILL

Auguste Comte called his great work a 'System of Positive Philosophy'; and it is through an analysis of the terms 'positive' and 'positivism' that we can most readily gain access to its full significance.

What in England we call a positive man is a man very sure of his opinions, and given to expressing them in a trenchant, dogmatic way; rather prone to contradict others, and rather intolerant of contradiction for himself. In that sense the epithet would be not inaptly applied to the founder of Positivism himself; but, seeing that as much might be said of nearly all the systematic thinkers that have ever lived, it will not help us to differentiate his philosophy from theirs. It is, however, not from the English but from the French usage of this adjective that most light may be obtained.

He whom our neighbours call *un homme positif*, though possibly quite as unpleasant as our positive man, is not unpleasant in the same way. He is what we should style a matter-of-fact person, despising romance and sentiment, taking his stand on realities alone. And from its inevitable suggestion of such a character the word Positivism has come to be most gravely misunderstood in France, as if it were a philosophy which deliberately excluded from human life such elements as poetry, tenderness, and self-devotion; just as, by an equally gross misunderstanding, Utilitarianism has been supposed to exclude them in England. Still the French meaning will help us to understand that positivism is so called, in the first instance, because it professes to teach matter of fact instead of matter of

fiction. Now, among fictions, Comte includes all theological beliefs whatsoever.[1] His sympathies were altogether with Hume and Diderot as against the deistical school of the eighteenth century from Toland to Rousseau.[2] And, again, unlike Rousseau, he entertained a very strong animosity towards Christianity as distinguished from Catholicism,[3] an animosity extending even to the character of its Founder.

If it be asked on what grounds Comte rejected theological belief, the answer is that the question has been already settled. According to him, the work of destruction had been sufficiently well done by the rationalists of the previous century, while their successors were more particularly called to the work of reconstruction. What is more, theology has been to a great extent spontaneously replaced by the growth of science. For the very essence of theological beliefs is to suppose that natural phenomena are produced by wills like our own, whereas science consists in reducing them to law, that is, to a system of invariable coexistence and succession. Thus positivism confronts and replaces theology, as a body of scientific doctrine giving an account of the world and of man adequate to all the purposes for which knowledge is of any value whatever. For, in seeking to make ourselves acquainted with the nature of things, our object, according to Comte, ought not to be the satisfaction of an idle curiosity, but the furtherance of human well-being. And this is not merely the only knowledge worth having; it is, after all, the only knowledge to be had. Things are only given in relation to our faculties, and are inaccessible to us out of that relation. Hence we are ignorant, and must ever remain ignorant, of what they are in themselves, of their essences. First and final causes, or in other words the origin and destiny of the world, are equally withdrawn from our observation, and are not to be discovered by any effort of reasoning. We are, of course, free to conjecture, but our conjectures, from the nature

[1] 'Radicalement chimériques comme toutes [les opinions] qu' inspire une théologie quelconque, restât-elle réduite à son dogme fondamental' ('Catéchisme Positiviste,' p. ix.). If this is not atheism I should like to know what is.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. x.

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. xiii.–xiv., where the Christian doctrines are described as having much more than merited the repulsion felt for them during three centuries by the noblest Romans.

of the case, do not admit of verification. Positivism rejects not only theology but metaphysics also.

Here we come on a new antithesis, introducing us to a new aspect, or rather to two new aspects of the word positive. Positive science is not only opposed to theology as matter of fact to matter of fiction; it is also opposed to metaphysics as certainties to conjectures, and as realities to phrases. For metaphysical systems are all, without exception, not merely hopeless but illusory. In trying to account for phenomena they do but substitute a description for an explanation. Where theologians put animated beings as the causes of physical events, metaphysicians put the conceptions of their own reason in which the event is simply reproduced under an abstract form. Thus the mediaeval philosophers explained the rise of water in a suction pump by the famous principle that nature abhors a vacuum; and the doctor in Molière's comedy explains the action of opium by its dormitive power. These, of course, are extreme and very trite instances of the method in question, and had been objects of ridicule long before Comte. What constitutes his originality, in this respect, is that he reduced all metaphysics to a parallel procedure on a much larger scale, or at least suggested such a mode of criticism for others to work out.

His own interests lay in a different direction; they were not critical but reconstructive, scientific, and practical. He condemns the metaphysical method as not only illusory but misleading and obstructive. According to him, it still infests the positive sciences with sham solutions, such as the elastic ether in physics and the vital principle in physiology, which substitute the appearance for the reality of knowledge, thus hindering investigation into the actual facts and laws of nature. What is worse, the abstract method tends to generalise partial and limited views, stamping them with an absolute value to which they have no real claim, and whose unreality becomes obvious when the abstraction is referred back to the facts whence it is derived. For example, nature, as Galileo sarcastically observed, seems not to abhor a vacuum above a height of thirty-two feet. Opium contains ingredients which are not sedative; and alcohol only seems to stimulate one part of the nervous system because it deadens another part.

Comte's hostility to metaphysical ideas must, however, be

attributed above all to what, in his opinion, is their noxious influence on government and society, their anarchic and destructive character. Here we come to the very taproot of positivism, the desire to build up where other philosophies had been content to pull down. While substituting matter of fact for fictions and phrases, it accords but a grudging and provisional toleration to the rationalistic methods by which fiction is destroyed, and to the corresponding political system which organises anarchy under the name of constitutional or representative government. Constitutionalism avowedly bases itself on the rights of man; and these are a mere string of metaphysical abstractions which generalise and stereotype certain arrangements valuable only as indicating the decay and dissolution of certain exhausted methods of social organisation. The right of private judgment means only that the old spiritual authority has become fatally discredited, while the new authority has not yet been constituted or even announced. The right of the people to elect their representatives means that the feudal monarchies have gone to pieces, and that an industrial hierarchy has not yet taken their place. All the great and stable institutions of the past rested on theological beliefs which are now approaching their extinction; and in like manner the orderly progressive society of the future will be founded on the demonstrated truths of positive science, not on the sterile abstractions and negations of the revolutionary period.

Although without theological belief, that society will not be without a religion. It will have indeed what practically formed the essence of all theologies from fetichism to monotheism, the worship of man by man, for that is what anthropomorphism really meant. This new religion, which is the old one, will have its priesthood and its ritual, closely modelled on Catholic types. For Catholicism reigned over men's hearts and consciences not by virtue of its chimerical dogmas, but by virtue of its admirable adaptation to their social needs. As the consummate product of a long and difficult elaboration conducted under the co-operation of so many great minds, it cannot be destined to disappear after such a comparatively short-lived and imperfect supremacy.[1] Positivism meets all

[1] I think it is M. Faguet who has observed that this assumption of a final cause for Catholicism betrays a metaphysical lapse on Comte's part.

the legitimate demands of the religious revival, while rejecting its reactionary extravagances, by furnishing men's aspirations with a satisfying object, scientifically proved to exist as collective Humanity, and fitly typified under the consecrated image of the Virgin Mother and her Divine Child.

Such, sketched in rapid outline, and with especial reference to the side which alone interests us here, is the philosophy of Auguste Comte. In that reference Comte's analogy to Hegel will be at once perceived. There is the same reaction against reaction, the same return from romanticist dreaming to the healthier tradition of the pre-revolutionary period, the same frank acceptance of the Revolution itself as a step forward not to be retraced. As a complement and corrective to this radicalism there is the same wide and sympathetic grasp of history, the same preference for concrete realities, combined in both philosophers with a wonderful facility and fondness, often degenerating into pedantry, for the manipulation of abstract conceptions. Their respective attitudes towards religion are such as might be expected from a Protestant and from a Catholic thinker. Hegel values Christianity as a system of philosophical ideas presented in such a way as to be understood by the great masses who are untrained in the exercise of speculative reason. Everything in the creeds is true, but only true as interpreted by a method which certainly seems to deprive the articles of their most obvious meaning. To Comte, on the other hand, Christianity as a specific religion is both untrue and immoral. But incidentally the movement begun by Jesus, or more properly speaking by St. Paul, performed three inestimable services for humanity. First of all it gave a concrete embodiment to that monotheism which is the supremely generalised form of all theology, and which the greatest minds of Greece and Rome had already reached by a process of metaphysical abstraction. Then it furnished the germ whence the vast organisation of the Catholic Church unfolded itself in the course of ages. And, thirdly, it set up for all time a principle of vital importance to the healthy constitution of society, that is the complete independence of the Spiritual Power. The State has for its function to preserve material order and to organise industry. The Church, on the

other hand, having public opinion for its sole sanction, has for its function to educate the young, to watch over the morals of the community, and to direct its intellectual activity towards the highest social ends.

Such a division of labour is no new thing. It characterised to some extent the Catholic feudalism of the Middle Ages. It had been attempted in the polytheistic societies of antiquity, but with such an imperfect balance of forces that no permanent equilibrium could be secured. In the great Oriental theocracies the power of the priesthood rose to such a height as to paralyse the State, and to unfit its leaders for establishing a universal empire by armed force, and thus preparing the reign of peaceful industry. In the Mediterranean republics the spiritual power was almost annulled, with the result, in Greece, of liberating the human intellect from all authority, and thereby immensely accelerating its progress, at the cost, however, of complete moral anarchy, so that the political forces of the race were consumed in domestic dissensions; while in Rome a ruling military class at the head of a united people were left untrammelled in their career of universal conquest. A true equilibrium was first created by the Catholic Church, which, entering the Roman Empire as a new power, took up a position of spiritual independence, and negotiated on equal terms with the secular authorities. Every Catholic dogma was elaborated in reference to sacerdotal claims, and should be interpreted only in this connexion. Whatever the priesthood did for morality must be ascribed to systematised personal influence, not to the dread of future punishments, which are totally unavailing as sanctions of conduct. There is therefore no reason why a reconstituted priesthood, teaching nothing but the demonstrated truths of science, and without an appeal to the secular arm, should not do as much or more for the society of the future as their clerical predecessors did for the society of mediaeval Europe.

Like all men of great synthetic genius, Auguste Comte has been much disparaged and much glorified, much hated and much loved. We can hardly look forward to a time when his merits shall have ceased to be a subject of controversy, for there is no philosopher, from Pythagoras downward, whose place in the intellectual pantheon has been irrevocably determined. In life

he made many enemies; and his personal foibles continue to count as a deduction from his fame. Few writers have expressed themselves more clearly, and few with less charm of style. Wholly devoted to ideal ends, his life yet lacks the supreme dignity we are accustomed to associate with that exclusive consecration to the things of mind. Nor has the prophet of Humanity made good the moral deficiencies of the sage. For the founder of a new religion to be crucified and rise again on the third day is a less indispensable condition for its success than Talleyrand affected to believe; but it is hardly asking too much to require that he should either be raised above the multitude on a solid pedestal of authenticated heroism, or appear encircled with the aureole of a legendary reputation; and neither distinction can be claimed for the first Pontiff of the Positivist Church.

Returning from these semi-mystical pretensions to questions more susceptible of argumentative discussion, I would venture to say, paradoxical as it may seem, that the chief error of positivism lies in its concessions to the metaphysical method. Systematic thinkers are usually weakest on the side where they feel themselves most secure; and Comte is no exception to the rule. In excluding the essences of things together with their first and final causes from investigation, he seems to assume, or to admit, that there are such things, but that, like theological mysteries, they are placed beyond our comprehension. Here he follows Kant, or at any rate the agnosticism which Kant, whether he really taught it or not, has done so much to popularise. Now experience seems to show that the hope of solving mysteries offers irresistible attractions to the human mind; and the new Catholicism, supposing it to be established, is likely to be as little successful in preventing their discussion as the old.

This restriction of enquiry, however, to phenomena, implies more than the existence of unknown entities and causes. It also involves a distinction between appearance and reality quite in the metaphysical style, an example of that false abstraction which Comte himself truly characterised as inherent in the metaphysical method. He was not the first to enter a protest against this one-sided procedure of which the revolutionists had made fatal use in the political sphere, which the

rising study of history tended above all to correct. Coleridge's not very lucid distinction between reason and understanding was an attempt in the same direction—illustrating by the way the very error against which it protests—and Hegel's Logic, in some ways more positive than positivism itself, goes to prove the necessary self-contradictions arising from the isolation of conceptions only intelligible and fruitful in their combination. A deeper speculation will correct to some extent the mistakes of a cruder speculation; but the ultimate safeguards are only to be found in experience, and in the application of ideas to life. And even experience is infested by the metaphysical method, which tends to isolate what is now passing from its context in the past and future, from its coexistence with what is occurring elsewhere. Hence comes the fallacy, already noted, of giving a fixed and generalised expression to what is merely temporary, limited, and even accidental. Philosophers try to correct this other one-sidedness by forcing antithetical tendencies into an appearance of harmony. But there is a false synthesis as well as a false abstraction, and sometimes it is the more mischievous of the two, as imparting an artificial vigour to what is obsolete and should be swept away. And the practical impulse only makes matters worse by encouraging a hasty temper which frames premature generalisations that they may be applied at once to the reformation of mankind.

Comte, one may say, committed every possible mistake that the metaphysical method could suggest in attempting to build up a social science. Hastily abstracting the framework of Catholicism from its soul of theological belief, he uncritically gave that framework a value which was more than it was really entitled to; and he fell into this error under the pressure of associations peculiar to the time of his own early training. The son of royalist and Catholic parents, brought up, moreover, in the full flush of the romantic movement, he accepted its interpretation of history as final. Thus it happens that his enthusiasm for the mediaeval Church curiously recalls Hurrell Froude's sentiments on the same subject; and their agreement is natural enough, since both took their views from the writings of the French Catholic apologists. What had so great a past must have a greater future. In the same way, as war had gone on so long, and militarism had recently been developed on a

great scale by Napoleon, it must possess an element of enduring value. That element was military organisation, which Comte accordingly proposed to apply to industry, without considering whether this had not grown up and flourished under a totally different *régime*. And to treat industry under any form as the predominant character of society in its final stage of evolution was one of those premature generalisations founded on a limited experience which are a note of the metaphysical method.

It may be stretching the significance of metaphysics beyond even the extent permitted by Comte's own elastic phraseology if we apply it to his summary dismissal of war and theology into the limbo of antiquated practices and beliefs. But it seems certain that here also he too hastily assumed the permanence of contemporary conditions. St. Simonianism, the school in which Comte served his philosophical apprenticeship, was pacific and anti-clerical. The government of Louis Philippe, under which his system took its final shape, pursued a pacific and anti-clerical policy. Hence he became possessed by a conviction that war and theology were finally played out, that history had irrevocably judged and condemned them. I am no admirer of either, and I should be the last to maintain that they will not eventually be outgrown. But it is worse than futile, it is mischievous to shut one's eyes to present and pressing realities. We know by sad experience that there were vast abuses in Comte's time whose removal would have been hopeless without recourse to arms. Nor can we be confident that the still outstanding national and social controversies will not again and again necessitate an appeal to the same sanguinary court of arbitration.

As regards theology, there is still less doubt of its continued vitality, and that not least in the native land of positivism. It is still vigorous and active among us, profiting by that very indifference against which Lamennais blindly protested as the last and worst enemy of God, using all the resources of modern civilisation for its own support, playing off political parties and hostile nations against one another, necessitating a ceaseless reconsideration of questions which Comte fancied were finally closed. Those who will may call the negative criticism of religious beliefs metaphysical; but at any rate it is something

without which the positive sciences would find a difficulty in holding their own against superstition.

Comte's philosophy has been epigrammatically described as Catholicism *minus* Christianity;[1] a formula for which one of his English disciples has proposed to substitute Catholicism *plus* Science.[2] Combining the two, we get P = (C − Ch. + Sc.), an equation which exactly represents the three stages of thought, theological, metaphysical, and positive, combined in a synthesis which at once exhibits itself as an attempt to sum up and reconcile all the warring tendencies of contemporary thought—itself an eminently metaphysical idea. Unfortunately for the mediator, these tendencies quite refused to be reconciled on such a basis. Catholics and religionists generally saw in the system at the time of its first publication nothing but the negation of their religious beliefs. Liberals were offended by the concessions to their reactionary opponents; and men of science rather resented the dictatorial interference of an amateur with the method and scope of their studies.

The situation still remains practically unchanged. At no time has Positivism acted on public opinion in the way its founder anticipated, as a complete body of doctrine. What fell in with the tendencies of the age was picked out; what opposed them fell away. Like other great countrymen of his, Calvin and Descartes for example, Comte had more success abroad than at home. What recognition his philosophy now receives in France it owes chiefly to light reflected back from England, the principal focus of his influence. There indeed it has been enormous, though perhaps not altogether of the kind that he would have approved. Positivism, in fact, told on English thought not so much by awakening interest in new ideas as by resuscitating old ideas originally peculiar to this island and afterwards discredited by the religious revival.

I say 'this island' rather than England in order to emphasise the great part played by Scottish philosophers in the general intellectual history of Europe, and the extent to which they figure as precursors of Auguste Comte. Above all, Hume by his 'Essays on Human Understanding,' and Thomas

[1] Huxley, 'Collected Essays,' Vol. I., p. 156.

[2] Richard Congreve, 'Essays Political, Social, and Religious,' p. 265.

Brown by his 'Treatise on Cause and Effect,' accomplished the reduction of all knowledge to the establishment of the laws of coexistence and succession among phenomena, which positivism has systematically worked out. James Mill brought Hume's philosophy to England, and taught it, combined with Benthamism, to his son and to George Grote, thus preserving the tradition of eighteenth-century thought as against the transcendentalism of Coleridge, and the reactionary spiritualism of Sir William Hamilton.

Meanwhile another Scotchman, whose name we are not accustomed to associate with the cause of progress and enlightenment, was helping, after his fashion, to undermine every sort of conservatism and to revive the enthusiasm of the revolutionary period. It may seem paradoxical to represent Carlyle as in any way a fellow-labourer with James Mill, and still more as a precursor of Comte. Yet the perfectly unsystematic character of Carlyle's mind made it hospitable to a seething mass of unreconciled tendencies, some of them acquired by direct inheritance from the school against which his most passionate objurgations were habitually directed. Neither the vociferous romanticism of his youth nor the aristocratic Toryism of his old age should blind us to the undercurrent of sympathy with reforming rationalism never long unfelt beneath the roar and foam and spray of his superficial idolatrous absolutism. And his ambiguous, really undecided attitude between the opposing schools made it easier for some to find their way back from the obscurantist side to the steadier friends of reason.

Carlyle, to begin with, rejected all that part of religion against which the Enlightenment had made war, that is its supernatural element. 'It is as certain as mathematics,' he told Froude, 'that no such thing [as a miracle] ever has been or can be.'[1] For Roman Catholicism he had the hatred of a Puritan and a freethinker combined. He had the heartiest contempt for the Anglican revival and its promoters, among whom he most unjustly reckoned Coleridge; nor did the more liberal religious tendencies of such divines as Julius Hare, Maurice, and the Oxford professors, find favour in his eyes. To be called a pantheist did not scandalise him except perhaps by rousing his dislike for formulas; and in his later years at least he

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 3.

summarily rejected the doctrine of a future life.[1] What he thought about the Hebrew Scriptures is sufficiently shown by his famous phrase about the Exodus from Houndsditch; while some vague declamations about the worship of sorrow can go but a little way to counterbalance a style of teaching in radical opposition to the spirit of the New Testament.

What has drawn many religious minds to the study and appreciation of Carlyle's works is the dislike for what he called 'mad joy of Denial,'[2] and his abounding sympathy with the 'ages of faith'—so long as there was no attempt to revive them for the benefit of the modern world. But here he was completely at one with the detested founder of Positivism, this sentiment being just the romantic element shared by both with all the most eminent thinkers and writers of the age. The difference between them was that Carlyle spared himself the trouble of reconstruction, except under the not particularly practical form of literary portraiture, an art in which he certainly surpassed all his contemporaries, cared nothing for general truths outside geometry and morals, and indulged in the maddest joy of all, the aimless denial of denial itself.

Towards the typical rationalist, Voltaire, Carlyle's attitude is more sympathetic than Comte's. Even in his romantic days he glorifies the great liberator for having given 'the death-stab to modern Superstition.' 'That horrid incubus,' he goes on to say, 'which dwelt in darkness shunning the light is passing away; with all its racks and poison-chalices, and foul sleeping-draughts is passing away without return. . . . Superstition is in its death-lair, the last agonies may endure for decades, or for centuries; but it carries the iron in its heart, and will not vex the earth any more.'[3] In private too Carlyle had been exulting over those sarcasms of Gibbon's which 'killed dead' what they stung.[4] Other death-stabs and death-stings not less keen had been delivered long before Voltaire and Gibbon by Xenophanes and Plato. Every age must repeat for itself this endless process of killing superstition. Here again Carlyle, like Comte, fails to explain why what he took for mortal

[1] 'Life of Tennyson,' Vol. II., p. 410.
[2] In the Essay entitled 'Characteristics.'
[3] Essay on Voltaire, *sub fin.*
[4] 'Reminiscences,' Vol. I., p. 102.

thrusts seemed to others vain blows, malicious mockery, and the show of violence offered to a majestic apparition invulnerable as air.

In 1837 Carlyle's 'French Revolution' opened that splendid period of narrative literature in history and fiction which lasted for nearly half a century, terminating with his own biography by Froude. It is not, however, as a literary masterpiece that the book interests us here, but as a sign of the times. Up till then the Revolution had, in Britain, been chiefly studied and written about by orthodox Tories, to whom it was an abomination quite as much on religious as on political grounds. So intimate indeed was the connexion between its two aspects that, as I have already mentioned, John Mill gave up his intention of writing its history on finding that he could not do the work adequately without disclosing his own very unpopular religious opinions at the risk of ruining his official career, and consequently handed over his materials to Carlyle, who felt no such obligation or dreaded no such persecution. I need hardly say that Carlyle is thoroughly on the side of the French people, as against the defenders of the *Ancien Régime*, while at the same time he recognises that the shams and shows which the revolution burned up stood for what had once been realities but were now nuisances. On the subject of religion the writer's silence is perhaps more eloquent than any words could then have been; and Anthony Froude, when he read the work, perceived at once that it represented a tendency diametrically opposed to that impressed on him by his brother and by Dr. Newman.

Three years later, in lecturing on Hero-worship, Carlyle admits only a single representative of Catholic Christianity, Dante, into his pantheon. More than half the whole number are Protestants, and of the remainder one is Mahomet, a great object of eighteenth-century admiration. Romanticism, already made ridiculous by the Eglinton tournament, is evidently giving way at every point before the modern spirit. But Carlyle had neither the organising and combining genius nor the scientific knowledge needed in order to concentrate all the scattered forces of that spirit into a solid body of doctrine massive enough to walk over the pietistic revival and to trample it into impotence if not into silence. Least of all had

he the intelligence and sympathy to appreciate what Comte had done, and to make his services available for restoring the supremacy of reason over English thought. That function fell to his friend, and at one time seeming disciple, John Stuart Mill.

Mill and Carlyle are generally opposed to one another as representing fundamental divergencies of method and conclusion; and extreme partisans are apt to describe them as respectively embodying what was best, or worst, in the philosophic direction of the early and middle Victorian periods. Nevertheless, both then and afterwards ingenuous youth continued to study the writings of both masters with about equal admiration, and without any particular sense of distraction or disturbance resulting from the superficial conflict of their teaching. Indeed, as neither of them agreed with himself, the fact of their not agreeing with one another counted for less than would have been felt in the case of more consistent or less candid guides.

Brought up by his father to be 'a sort of utilitarian Messiah,'[1] the younger Mill early acquired an enthusiasm for classical ideals which combined with a naturally impulsive and romantic temperament to alienate him from what he considered the cold and narrow-minded dogmatism of the Benthamite school. Wordsworth's poetry early became his favourite reading, although for genius he rated Shelley higher. At that time utilitarians still believed that self-interest was the only trustworthy motive of conduct, and that the only way to make men virtuous was by teaching them to identify their private happiness with the greatest happiness of the greatest number. As Plato, the Stoics, and Butler held precisely the same opinion, there could be nothing particularly degrading or dangerous about it; but it had the fault of not being true, as Mill himself soon ascertained by simple introspection. Imagining a state of society in which the Benthamite ideals should be perfectly realised, he asked himself whether that would be enough to secure his own personal happiness, and his inner consciousness told him that it would not.[2] Mill found his way out of the difficulty in a manner which, as he describes it, is not very easy to follow; but as an intelligible

[1] James Martineau's phrase.

[2] 'Autobiography,' p. 134.

result we learn that he was led to attach great importance to the culture of feeling; and that he found Wordsworth's poetry a valuable means to that end. His new studies brought him into sympathy with the Coleridgean school as represented by Sterling and Maurice, who helped to widen his views, and were probably influenced in their turn by him.

Another Benthamite principle, based on the same primary law of self-interest as the mainspring of conduct, was the desirability of establishing a representative government based on universal suffrage. Under such a constitution whatever policy commanded the adhesion of the majority would prevail; and as every one pursued his own happiness, this would approach as nearly as possible to realising the greatest happiness of the greatest number. James Mill is chiefly responsible for this practical application of the utilitarian philosophy, and his version of the theory was made the subject of a vigorous attack by Macaulay in the 'Edinburgh Review.' John Mill thought Macaulay's arguments conclusive as against his father, but remained dissatisfied with the empirical Whig method of studying politics, and was left without any fixed opinions on the question.

At this juncture the positivist influence first intervened. At the time of the Benthamite controversy with Macaulay Mill came across a youthful work of Auguste Comte's entitled '*Système de Politique Positive*,' which, according to a statement made many years afterwards, contributed more than any other cause to detach him from the Benthamite school.[1] But Mill's adhesion to the new philosophy was at first much more limited than it afterwards became. What he learned from the 'Politique' acted more by suggestion than by direct instruction, and more as a solvent of his former views than as putting anything solid in their place. Certainly in his private correspondence he subjects Comte's ideas to a very severe criticism, which seems not to leave one stone of the system standing on another. More particularly he regards it as totally unfitted for the English people, whose distrust for general ideas would prevent them from even looking at it.[2] General beliefs, according to

[1] In his first letter to Comte (1842). 'Lettres inédites de J. S. Mill à Auguste Comte,' p. 2.

[2] 'Correspondance inédite avec Gustave D'Eichthal,' p. 127.

Mill, theological or otherwise, do not determine the stages of civilisation; for, were it so, there would not be many nations professing Christianity whose conduct is its practical negation.[1] Whatever may be the case in France, in England the great capitalists, whom Comte proposes to make the supreme rulers of civil society, are quite unfit to be entrusted with such authority, being the most narrow-minded and bigoted class of the community, as regards everything outside their business and their domestic interests.[2] And the same remark applies to the artists and men of science, who are as little competent to direct the spiritual movement. Even supposing us to be in possession of a complete social philosophy, we ought not to make it known in the present unprepared state of public opinion. Especially where, as with us, theological beliefs have not yet given way to criticism, a beginning should be made by reforming such of our institutions as oppose a barrier to all progress, degrading and brutalising the intelligence and morality of the people.[3] For so long as wealth alone gives a high social position, the privileged classes can have no authority in matters of belief, cannot constitute a spiritual power. And in England this very accumulation of wealth is due to an unjust distribution of political power.

Characteristically enough, instead of parting with his speculative liberty, Mill reserved a completer liberty of speculation for the future, particularly as regards the sacredness of private property and of marriage. And while giving up the absolute desirability of democracy at all times and in all places as a mere metaphysical dogma, he continued to support the radical programme in England on the ground of political expediency.

I have already observed how Comte unwittingly fell a prey to the metaphysical method in his attempt to construct a social doctrine. That is to say, he gave an absolute and eternal value to the tendencies of his own age, combined according to a formula of his own devising, which he very properly denied to any of them taken singly. But this method, when once readmitted into speculation, cannot be limited by the preferences of any individual thinker, however ingenious or authoritative

[1] 'Correspondance inédite avec Gustave D'Eichthal,' p. 127.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 19. [3] P. 129.

he may be. As none knew better than Comte, it is essentially elastic and subjective; nor did these qualities belie themselves under the manipulation of a theorist whose temperament and antecedents differed from his own so widely as Mill's. The young English reformer 'looked forward to a future which shall unite the best qualities of the critical with the best qualities of the organic periods; unchecked liberty of thought, unbounded freedom of individual action in all modes not hurtful to others; but also convictions as to what is right and wrong, useful and pernicious, deeply engraven on the feelings by early education and general unanimity of sentiment, and so firmly grounded in reason and the true exigencies of life that they shall not, like all former and present creeds religious, ethical, and political, require to be periodically thrown off and replaced by others.'[1]

In fewer words, people are all to be taught the same opinions; they are then to think and say and do what they like, but at the same time never to change their opinions, at least on fundamentals, with the result of all agreeing together, and living happily ever afterwards. Neither Hegel nor Comte has perhaps quite approached the circularity of this square.

Some hints of the new philosophy were given in a series of articles contributed by Mill to the 'Examiner' under the title of 'The Spirit of the Age,' which drew from Carlyle the exclamation, 'Here is a new Mystic!'[2] We have seen that mysticism tends to develop into a solution of contradictories; and Carlyle probably meant that the anonymous journalist was on the track of one more such solution. Mystics always feel drawn towards one another; but personally they are even more intolerant of contradiction than the rest of mankind. At that time Mill and Carlyle had a good deal in common, and each was disposed to overestimate the other's agreement with himself. On a visit to London in 1831, Carlyle made enquiries about the author of 'The Spirit of the Age.' The first impressions were rather favourable. He is described as 'a slender, rather tall and elegant youth . . . not great yet distinctly gifted and amiable . . . seemed to profess about as plainly as

[1] 'Autobiography,' p. 166.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

modesty would allow that he had been converted by the head of the Mystic School.'[1]

In point of fact the youth had learned nothing from Carlyle, had only come to see some of his own ideas expressed in Carlyle's writings, expressed with a poetic enthusiasm that delighted him. For a time they were warm friends; but the differences in their philosophy remained irreconcilable. Mill sent his supposed teacher a list of them, and received in reply the oracular intimation that he 'was as yet consciously nothing of a mystic.' When it became clear to the head of the School that there was no hope of his developing a mystical consciousness, Mill never discovered, but the melancholy truth must have become clear by the summer of 1836, two years after Carlyle had definitely taken up his abode in London; for at that date we find Mrs. Carlyle writing to her husband that 'poor Mill's very intellect seems to be failing him in his strongest point: his implicit admiration and subjection to you.'[2] Carlyle, on his side, describes Mill as 'withering into the miserablest metaphysical *scrae*, body and mind,'[3] that he had almost ever met with in the world. What could they want with one another? he asks.

What he wanted was that 'implicit admiration and subjection' which, if it ever had been given—which is very doubtful—had now been withdrawn. What Mill wanted was to find his way out of these barren dogmatisms, to help others out of them by an appeal to general principles, by fixing the standards of evidence, of proof, by organising reason; in short, to do over again for his age, in the light of modern science, what Locke had done a century and a half before for the age of the Revolution. Neither Carlyle nor any other mystic could help him to do that.

On the other hand, his early training in the great school of legal reform now proved of priceless value. Not for the first time in the history of logic was this beneficent reaction of practical interests on speculation then displayed. Greek dialectics had been built up on the model of cross-examination in

[1] Froude's 'Life of Carlyle,' Vol. II., p. 190. The modesty, I presume, is Carlyle's, not Mill's.

[2] 'New Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle,' Vol. I., p. 60.

[3] 'Life,' Vol. III., p. 74.

the popular law-courts, with constant reference in its higher stages to the methods of geometrical demonstration. In like manner Bacon applied the procedure of legal inquisition to the more difficult task of eliciting the secrets of nature. And Mill had served his own philosophical apprenticeship by editing Bentham's 'Rationale of Judicial Evidence.' His precocity, says Bain, was most remarkable in Logic, on which his father 'put enormous stress.'[1] His review of Whately, written at twenty-two, is 'a landmark not merely in the history of his own mind, but in the history' of the science.[2] Interest in the subject of investigation was still further stimulated by his father's political differences with Macaulay, and by discussions between himself and other young men at Grote's house on the syllogistic logic. In 1830 he began putting down some ideas on paper, but on going on to the theory of induction, found himself pulled up by ignorance of the physical sciences, which, with the exception of botany, never seem to have interested him much, except as object-lessons in reasoning. Whewell's 'History of the Inductive Sciences,' published in 1837, supplied just what he wanted for this purpose, and enabled him to profit more fully by the ideas of Sir John Herschel's masterly 'Discourse.' Under this double impulse the Logic was resumed and two-thirds of it completed when, at the end of the same year, Mill came across the first two volumes of Comte's 'Philosophie Positive,' the only ones then published.[3] Wheatstone had just brought them over from Paris,[4] and had shown them to Brewster, by whom they were reviewed in the 'Edinburgh' for August, 1838, with enthusiastic praise for the author's knowledge and power of thought, but with severe reprobation for his rejection of all theological belief.[5]

The 'Philosophie Positive' was completed somewhat earlier than the 'System of Logic.' Mill read the successive volumes as they appeared 'with avidity,' though not always with agreement. On the general principles of knowledge he had come independently to the same conclusions as Comte, or rather had adopted the same ideas from the thinkers of the previous

[1] Bain's 'John Stuart Mill,' p. 26.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 36.
[3] 'Autobiography,' p. 209.
[4] Bain's 'John Stuart Mill,' p. 70.
[5] According to Bain, Brewster was using Comte as a stick to beat Whewell with (*ibid.*).

century. In completing the first draught of his treatise and in rewriting the whole he borrowed some conceptions of no importance in the present connexion. Finally, he gave in his public adhesion to the law of the three stages, according to which 'in every subject of human enquiry speculation first tends to explain phenomena by supernatural agencies, then by metaphysical abstractions, and in the third or final state confines itself to ascertaining their laws of succession and similitude.'[1]

Apart from agreement in particular opinions, the first edition of Mill's 'Logic' contained numerous expressions of enthusiastic admiration for the 'Philosophie Positive' and its author, well calculated to attract public attention and to win readers for that encyclopaedic work. And not content with this public testimony, Mill carried on an active propaganda for the views of Comte, with whom he was engaged in an affectionate correspondence, continued for five years and unhappily terminated, like his friendship with Carlyle, by irreconcilable differences of opinion. In this way Alexander Bain[2] and George Henry Lewes[3] were won over to the new theory of history; while Grote,[4] Sir William Molesworth,[5] and William Smith, afterwards well known as the author of 'Thorndale,' were induced to give it a partial acceptance;—Smith reviewing Comte favourably in 'Blackwood's Magazine' for March, 1843.[6]

We have now to set out the total effect severally and jointly produced by these two momentous works, the 'Logic' and the 'Philosophie Positive' on the course of English rationalism.

Mill's 'Logic' generally passes for the ablest and most influential manifesto produced by English philosophy during the nineteenth century in favour of the derivation of all knowledge from experience. And there is no doubt that Mill himself based his claim to recognition chiefly on that ground. Brought up to effect a peaceful revolution in public opinion, and first of all, to clear away the prejudices which still

[1] 'System of Logic,' Vol. II., p. 528 (ninth ed.).
[2] 'Lettres Inédites de Mill à Comte,' p. 240.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 224.
[4] P. 500.
[5] P. 181; cp. p. 356.
[6] This article first induced Bain to make a serious study of Comte.

obstructed the acceptance of new truth, he saw, or thought he saw, that such prejudices had their firmest support in the theory of *a priori* truths, that is beliefs given to us independently of experience, and possessing a higher warrant than experience can bestow. Of this theory mathematical axioms were held to furnish the strongest confirmation. These, it was urged, are accepted as soon as they are understood, and are thenceforth held with a conviction such as no proposition merely founded on experience can command. Such propositions as that two and two make four, and that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, are not only true but must be true ; we cannot conceive the possibility of their contradictories. Mill, on the contrary, maintained that the axioms of arithmetic and geometry have been learned, like everything else we know, from experience, and differ from what are called empirical truths merely through the psychological fact of an inseparable association set up between the terms of which they are composed. We have never seen two and two making a less or greater number than four. We have never seen a space enclosed by less than three straight lines. Consequently we cannot conceive such a case. It is what we call impossible.

The same principle holds through all orders of phenomena. Whatever we know is known by experience, and the most certain truths are those which have been generalised from the widest field of observation, while remaining uncontradicted by a single well-authenticated exception. Next to the propositions of arithmetic and geometry the most important and the best attested of such truths is the law of causation. Some philosophers have maintained of this also that it is known *a priori* ; but in this they are mistaken, and still more inexcusably mistaken than in the case of mathematical axioms. For it is a comparatively recent discovery that all events depend on determinate antecedents, and that on the repetition of the same antecedent the same event invariably follows. Ordinary experience presents us with a mere sequence of disconnected events, which seem to follow one another at random, or to occur suddenly without reference to any anterior event. Thus there is, as it were, a ready-made pattern on which to construct the notion of a world where the law of causation does not obtain, whereas there are no experiences that even seem to contradict

the axioms of arithmetic and geometry. What is more, the very persons who insist most strongly on an *a priori* derivation for the belief that every event must have a cause are also the most firmly persuaded that the will is free ; in other words, that human volitions are, to some extent, uncaused.

Mill himself found nothing in his own consciousness to justify the erection of causation into a necessity of thought. While asserting the absolute validity of this law within the limits of own experience, he refused to recognise its supremacy beyond those limits. For instance, he thought it quite possible that in the planets revolving round some remote star events might happen under some other law, or under no law at all. He does not seem to have contemplated any similar restriction on causality in time, as that it had only begun to operate a certain number of years ago or would cease to operate in any number of years hence. To have admitted as much would indeed have been fatal to the very existence of the law. For if the eternity of the causal chain be once denied or doubted, there is no reason why it should not be expected to break off to-morrow or next moment as well as a million years hence. Yet if Mill saw so much he ought to have seen that, in this respect, there is logically no distinction between time and space. We know by experience that causation is independent, and equally independent of both. When we speak of either as a coefficient we are referring in a loose way to quantitative variations in the agents really at work. Thus gravitation decreases as the square of the distance, simply because it is diluted by being spread over a wider area, in the same way as heat and light. So true indeed is this that if the law of succession among phenomena were found to vary, *cæteris paribus,* with their position in space, it is not our ideas about causation but our ideas about space that would be altered. It would go to prove that space was not homogeneous, and that the behaviour of the bodies contained in it was affected by the different constitution of its different parts. Thus the proposition that there is a cause for every change, so far from being shaken, would be enriched by a fresh illustration. The same reasoning applies to position in time, but not more to time than to space. Both time and space are, so to speak, infinitely weak. We may explain this with Leibniz by thinking of them as mere abstract

relations between real things, or we may explain it with Kant by thinking of them as subjective forms of intuition. But on either theory the grand fact remains the same.

I must add that, whatever may be the origin or validity of our knowledge, Mill seems to have been quite mistaken in the practical value that he attached to the issue between the experimental and the *a priori* theories. Both are compatible, and equally compatible, with a sound philosophy of progress, with what we call the spirit of true liberalism. On the other hand, either of them may be twisted into a support for reactionary prejudices and superstitions. It might even be contended with considerable plausibility that a close adherence to experience is less favourable to innovation than the appeal to principles transcending experience. James Mill may have felt this when he chose the intuitionist philosophy of Plato, rather than the more empirical philosophy of Aristotle, as the best instrument of education for his pupil. And John Mill had before long occasion to observe that Auguste Comte's close agreement with his own theory of knowledge left the founder of positivism as much a prey to ancestral prejudices about the position of women as any English transcendentalist could be. No one followed out his own rejection of apriorism with more unflinching consistency than George Grote; yet Grote stood immovably on the side of the slaveholders during the Secession War, besides setting his face stiffly against Mill's socialistic proclivities. On the other hand, Herbert Spencer, while practically upholding the theory that Mill thought so dangerous, certainly never associated it with the maintenance of abuses; and Thomas Green, who did more than any of his contemporaries to rehabilitate apriorism at Oxford, was conspicuous for his liberality and reforming zeal.

Mill had no wish to quarrel with theology, nor has he touched on its interest in this question. But it is notorious that the doctrine of an independent source of knowledge within the human mind has long been considered favourable to religious belief as against the claims of rationalism; and the new System of Logic was immediately assailed on this ground, although with the fullest recognition of its merits, by W. G. Ward, a pupil of Newman's, on behalf of the sacerdotal reaction. This antagonism belonged to the tradition of English thought

since Hobbes, and to the tradition of Western thought in general since Locke and the Enlightenment. Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists had insisted on eternal and immutable truths as against the materialism of the Leviathan; Reid restored intuitionism in his recoil from Hume's scepticism; and his philosophy was imported into France by the eclectic spiritualists of the Restoration as an antidote to what they called the sensualism, by which they really meant the free-thought, of the eighteenth century; while Coleridge was using the same weapon, as reforged by Kant, to crush Unitarianism and infidelity in England. There is indeed a certain community between the great theological method of mysticism and the philosophical theory of a truth independent of outward experience. But just as mysticism, when consistently carried out, leads to pantheism, so also apriorism finds its logical outcome in a monism which is the destruction of religious belief, whether it be elaborated by the infinite subtlety of Hegel's dialectic or by the more summary conclusions of Schopenhauer's Sufficient Reason. Even such timid reactionists as Coleridge and Cousin felt this logical constraint, and in their few moments of candour avowed that pantheism was true. And quite apart from pantheism, any consistent theory of reasoning, aprioristic or experimental, must tell against whatever denies reason, whether by appealing to authority as the foundation of all belief, or to the alleged practical consequences of religious belief in particular, as evidences of its truth.

Such a theory was at length supplied by Mill; and, from a rationalist point of view, it constituted the real power and telling value of his Logic. It was as if what the Stoic poet implored heaven to do for virtue[1] had been granted for the glory of reason. She showed herself in visible form, and the powers of sophistry paled before the beauty of the forsaken goddess. In a style whose charm recalled the great classics of English philosophy, and in which calm lucidity was happily allied with passionate conviction, the author explained to English readers what they had never been taught before, what true beliefs are, how they are acquired, how extended, how interwoven for mutual support; teaching them more especially

[1] 'Virtutem videant, intabescantque relicta' (Persius, III., 58).

how the vast edifice of physical science on which they had been accustomed to gaze with stupid wonder, as on a fairy palace raised by magic arts, really owed its existence to a more systematic application of the same processes by which we find our way about in everyday life. And he showed how what had done so much for mankind was destined to do still more, not by multiplying the appliances of material luxury, or by enabling a greater population to exist in equal squalor, but by carrying into the study of mind and morals, of society and government, the same methods by which the properties of space, the mechanism of the heavens, the composition of matter, and the conditions of animal life, had been so successfully unravelled.

For through this whole work there breathes the high disinterestedness of French idealism. Unlike his great predecessor, Lord Chancellor Bacon, the apostle of modern utilitarianism has no word of recognition for his countrymen's worship of material wealth, ignores indeed the industrial applications of science to such an extent that, so far as I am aware, the omission has never even been noticed before. But this disregard of material interests involves no neglect of human welfare, understood in the truest sense. Like a genuine Platonist, Mill subordinates all other enquiries to the enquiry into the laws of mind, the knowledge which gives most power, the means by which man becomes master of his fate. Under the threefold impulse of his father's tuition, of Carlyle's enthusiasm, and of Comte's example, he reconstitutes philosophy on the lines of Hume and Adam Smith, including whatever had been won since they passed away, eliminating all mystical illusions, and retaining nothing of romanticism but its individualising distinctiveness,[1] its religion of chivalry, and its comprehensive sympathy with the past.[2]

No form of English theology, whether the mystical Bibliolatry of the Evangelicals, the mystical traditionalism of Keble and Newman, the Germanising pietism of Arnold and Hare, or the dualistic theism of James Martineau, could stand up for a moment before the stringent demands of the lew logic. But

[1] 'Logic,' Bk. III., Chap. xiv., Sect. 2.

[2] I am here referring not only to the 'Logic,' but to the group of essays written about the same time.

Mill's treatise gave much more than an organised system of reason: it gave, or rather it rehabilitated, an objective view of the world, which, to begin with, makes reason possible, and with which, in its full extension, theology cannot live. I refer to the law of universal causation, which Mill makes the basis of his theory of scientific Induction. How he works out the connexion between the two does not concern us here: the interesting thing is his way of speaking about causation apart from induction. 'Every fact which has a beginning has a cause.' 'The state of the whole universe at any instant we believe to be the consequence of its state at the previous instant; insomuch that one who knew all the agents which exist at the present moment, their collocation in space, and all their properties, in other words the laws of their agency, could predict the whole subsequent history of the universe. . . . And if any particular state of the entire universe should ever recur a second time, all subsequent states would return too, and history would, like a circulating decimal of many figures, periodically repeat itself.'[1]

Among Greek philosophers the Stoics alone committed themselves to such a sweeping generalisation as this; and in practice their teaching was complicated by various equivocal concessions to popular superstition. Epicurus protested against it in the name of human liberty. Spinoza revived the law of causation along with other Stoic principles, but never clearly distinguished it from the chain of reasons and consequents by which, according to him, it is represented in the world of thought, nor from the underlying Power of which both alike are expressions. Hume was more interested in identifying causation with sequence than in asserting its universality. So far as I am aware, Laplace was the first modern to give the principle this absolute extension; and Mill's formula seems to be taken almost textually from his 'Essay on Probability.' Since the 'System of Logic' first appeared, the law of universal causation has been invested with quantitative precision by the law of the Conservation of Energy, and has received an imaginative representation from the theory of atomic mechanism; while the doctrine of evolution has enabled us to follow in detail some of

[1] 'System of Logic,' Vol. I., pp. 363 and 385-6 (fifth ed.), pp. 400-1 (ninth ed.).

its most interesting applications; but nothing has been altered in, or added to its essential content.

Human freewill is, of course, excluded by the law of universal causation. A man's actions form part of the present state of the universe, and like everything else in it, are determined by the previous state; this, again, is determined by its predecessor, and so on backward until we reach a state of things which existed before the human agent was born, and a still remoter state before the human race itself came into being. More precisely: the actions called free result from conscious volitions, and these again from character and circumstance. But character and circumstance are themselves the effect of causes beyond the control and even the knowledge of the individual whose life-history they determine. It is entirely right and completely consistent with the law of universal causation that, as between man and man, moral responsibility should be recognised; that is, that actions capable of being influenced by conscious motives should be subjected to the approval or displeasure of the community whose welfare they affect. But that beyond and above this subjection there should be a transcendent responsibility to the Cause of the universe, involving the infliction of useless penalties on souls kept alive through eternity for their endurance, is an irrational belief, irrational because it assumes that ethical principles can be in contradiction with one another. Supposing the machinery of unconditional sequence to have been set going by a free intelligence, then indeed such a transcendent responsibility might exist. But its whole weight would be transferred from the creature to the creator, who might well be invited, in Edward Fitzgerald's words, to take man's forgiveness for all the evil he had wrought. After a long and weary round English speculation returns to the standpoint of Anthony Collins; and the sense of sin, on which all Church parties in turn had built up their religion, collapses at the first touch of revivified reason. It was easy to sneer at this resumption of the old positions as a retrograde movement. But it was necessitated by the ostentatious revival of old superstitions in the face of modern enlightenment. An appeal to the divines of the seventeenth century was best met by an appeal to the philosophy of the eighteenth.

Mill knew little of theological literature, and perhaps did not anticipate the far-reaching reaction of his principle on contemporary speculation. But he fully accepted moral determinism as a part of the universal order, and an indispensable postulate if social phenomena were to be brought under the reign of law. At the same time, with characteristic conciliatoriness, he worked hard to remove certain prejudices which, in his opinion, opposed themselves to its more general reception. People, he thought, justly objected to the notions of necessity and compulsion in connexion with the experience of voluntary action. According to him, their consciousness revolts, not without reason, at the constraint supposed to be put on them from without. But this, he explains, is a misapprehension. Even in the inanimate world, causation does not imply, as the old philosophy taught, that one event has power to produce another, or to necessitate its occurrence. Certain antecedents are always followed by certain consequents—only that and nothing more. And in the case of human actions there is just this same phenomenon of sequence, without any mysterious compulsion exercised by the motives on the will. Indeed the motives are a part of ourselves, so that we may be truly said to participate as determining antecedents in the course of events.[1]

Some vulgar misconceptions were no doubt dispelled by these considerations; and substantially they are still good as against the gross misrepresentations of orthodox apologists. But on the question of language Mill seems decidedly at fault. He talks as if the word necessity, as ordinarily used in reference to volition, involved a particular theory of causation, which theory he rejects; and he fancies that with its rejection the difficulties of determinism will vanish. 'There are,' he says, 'few to whom mere constancy of succession appears a sufficiently stringent bond of union for so peculiar a relation as Cause and Effect. Even if the reason repudiates, the imagination retains the feeling of some more intimate connexion, of some peculiar tie or mysterious constraint exercised by the antecedent over the consequent.' And he agrees with those who repudiate the existence of such a constraint as exercised over their own volitions. But, he goes on to explain, there is no such tie in the case of inanimate objects. 'It would be more

[1] 'System of Logic,' Bk. VI., chap. ii., sect. 3.

correct to say that matter is not bound by necessity than that mind is so.'[1]

It seems desirable to distinguish between the notion of a tie and the notion of a mystery, and to examine them separately. Ropes and chains offer familiar examples of ties by which bodies, both animate and inanimate, are attached to each other, and constrained either to move or to remain still. Mill would not deny that this is just a particular instance of causation, that is, in the last analysis, a phenomenon of unconditional sequence, referred by physical science to what is called the force of cohesion. To speak, then, of a tie between antecedents and consequents, merely amounts to interpolating fresh antecedents in the chain of sequence, leaving the notion of necessity exactly where it was before. It may or may not be a cumbrous and useless proceeding; but there is nothing alarming about it; nor does it explain the popular objection to the idea of compulsion as associated with volition. People dislike being assimilated to dumb driven cattle just as much when the conduct of a string of camels has been analysed into a case of invariable sequence as they disliked it before Hume wrote.

Nor does the introduction of the word 'mysterious' make any difference to their feeling, or serve to differentiate unconditional sequence from necessity. Quite the contrary indeed. Mysteries are facts which we cannot explain, but of which we feel sure that there must be some explanation, if only we could get at it. And so long as the explanation remains hidden there is always a sort of feeling that the fact might be other than it is. Directly the explanation is given this feeling vanishes and gives place to a conviction of necessity. We see that the fact not only *is* but *must be* so. Of course a new mystery may be introduced, but the old mystery certainly disappears. The equality between the squares of the hypothenuse and the squares of the cathetes in a right-angled triangle might properly be called a mystery were it only known to us empirically, from experiments on a number of such figures. Since Pythagoras it has ceased to be a mystery, and has become a necessity of thought. So with the fact of gravitation. It is a mysterious tie between the particles of matter just because we do not see the necessity for it.

[1] 'System of Logic,' Bk. VI., chap. ii., sect. 3.

Mill himself seems to have felt the insufficiency of his 'mysterious tie' as an explanation of the repugnance felt towards using necessity and determinism as convertible terms. For he goes on to offer another and quite inconsistent explanation, which is that 'necessity implies much more than mere uniformity of sequence: it implies irresistibleness.' And he refers to certain uncontrollable forces of nature as an illustration of his meaning. It seems, then, that the necessity from which nature was supposed to be freed has been unceremoniously foisted on her again. But in point of fact there are no such irresistible forces; there are only combinations of forces, exceeding at a given moment the combinations by which they are opposed, with the result that motion in a particular direction is produced. And just the same thing happens in the case of our volitions; otherwise we should never act at all.

There is, however, though Mill did not perceive it, a sense in which necessity is habitually predicated of some volitions, even by the advocates of freewill; and we need only consider the special circumstances in which it is so predicated to understand why even a determinist may object to its use in the case of volitions generally. People who are quite innocent of metaphysics, but quite familiar with the unconscious logic of language, constantly speak of themselves or of others as being compelled or constrained to do, or under the necessity of doing, this or that, say of dropping somebody's acquaintance, or of retrenching some item of expenditure, when in the abstract they may quite well be conceived as acting in a different way. Now, in all such cases it will, I think, be found on examination that the assumed necessity is of a hypothetical, that is to say, a logical character. It means that to act in the way specified seems the only course compatible with the possibility of retaining or procuring some end, the superior desirability of which is supposed to be above discussion. We are forced to give up an acquaintance because to keep it would be incompatible with our personal dignity or comfort, or material interest, or other advantage to us of paramount importance. Similarly with retrenchment. We *must* give up an expensive luxury because our income does not enable us to buy both it and what are called the necessaries of life. But the compulsion, being logical, is not felt to the same extent by every one, and by some is not

felt at all. And there is a considerable margin of actions where this necessity does not apply; where, consequently, the predication of it is felt to be misplaced.

Even as regards actions commonly described as done under physical compulsion the purely logical value of the constraint exercised reveals itself on analysis. In such cases the sufferer has a choice of evils; he may resist to the death or submit to the demands of those who have him in their power. In other words, the necessity is not a necessity of obedience but a necessity of choice. When we say that Mary Stuart was forced to abdicate, we mean that she preferred the temporary resignation of her crown to the risk of death by public execution or private assassination. Her grandson, in the same position, would probably have chosen death.

Even in the extreme case of fatalism the necessity would seem to be logical rather than physical. On the assumption that the whole course of history has been predetermined either by a supernatural intelligence or by the very structure of the universe itself, the future comes to be thought of as existing already, or rather as existing eternally; and therefore to suppose that any coming event can be altered by a free volition is to suppose that a thing can both be and not be, which would involve a logical contradiction.

Returning from this digression, we have to continue our examination of Mill's Logic in its bearing on the theology of his age. We have seen that the law of universal causation cuts the ground from under Christianity, as then understood, by destroying the responsibility of the creature to the Creator, and virtually explaining the sense of sin as an imposture or a delusion. More than this, rightly understood it excludes the possibility of supernatural interference in any shape, whether as miracles, revelation, or special providence. Such events, if they occurred, would interrupt the chain of causal sequence, would break the continuity between the state of the universe at a given moment and its state at the preceding moment. The only conceivable alternative would be to make God himself a part of the universe, to interweave his volitions with the eternal chain of sequences, and to think of them, like our own volitions, as ultimately determined from without. In other words, we

should have to think of him as a finite and conditioned, not as an infinite and absolute Being.

A treatise on logic naturally suggests the question of proof: how are we to know that a Creator, whether finite or infinite, exists? Personally, Mill had a great respect for the argument from design. Long afterwards in his 'Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy' he recommended it to the defenders of religion as the best and most persuasive of proofs, with the crudely anthropomorphic observation that, 'it would be difficult to find a stronger argument in favour of Theism than that the eye must have been made by one who sees, and the ear by one who hears.'[1] Commenting on this astonishing utterance, Grote pointed out that 'when we predicate of men that they *see* or *hear* we affirm facts of extreme complexity, especially in the case of *seeing;* facts partly physical, partly mental, involving multifarious movements and agencies of nerves, muscles, and other parts of the organism, together with direct sensational impressions and mental reconstruction of the past, inseparably associated therewith.'[2] In short, the law of causation will not allow us to stop at a creator whose own structure requires explanation as much as the structure he is called in to account for.

A thinker so acute as Mill must have been fully awake to such difficulties; nor, if he had overlooked them, could they have failed to be brought under his notice by the teachers and friends whom he so enthusiastically admired, his father, Bentham, George Grote, Mrs. Taylor, and Alexander Bain. But although he had been brought up without any religious belief, and habitually associated with others who had given up theirs, through life his attitude towards theology remained persistently conciliatory. Even when enunciating the law of causation in all its fulness, he inserts a saving clause for the benefit of theism, which, were it taken seriously, would deprive that law of its universality, and so reduce it to impotence. For, admitting the possibility of a supernatural agent, no man can tell by experience—Mill's sole source of knowledge—when some new volition of the hypothetical power may next intervene and set his calculations at naught. What we mean by

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 551 (third ed.).
[2] 'Miscellaneous Writings,' p. 303.

the reign of law is precisely the elimination of such possibilities.

But universal causation does more than exclude supernatural intervention; it excludes creation. To say that each state of the universe results from the state immediately preceding it is to say that the world has existed and will continue to exist for ever, or at any rate that it is coeval with time. And a Coleridgean who tries to get out of the difficulty by discarding time as an objective reality must be content to exchange theism for pantheism; personality, whether human or divine, being inconceivable apart from the time-form.

Mill puts the seal to this expulsion of theological belief by openly accepting Auguste Comte's law of the three stages, which declares that the final outcome of speculation is to substitute the explanation of phenomena by uniformities of succession and similitude for their explanation by supernatural agencies.[1] In this formula there is evidence of a compromise with the romantic school, but it is a compromise in the French style, clear, bold, and straightforward. Our English logician proposes a more ambiguous arrangement. In the vain hope of reconciling irreconcilable adversaries he would compromise on the compromise. Whewell had very naturally objected to a view of history which set his religion at odds with his omniscience. In his opinion the Positive Philosophy was distinctly contradictory to the Thirty-nine Articles. But Mill assures him that this is a misapprehension. 'The doctrine that the theological explanation belongs only to the infancy of our knowledge of phenomena ought not to be construed as if it was equivalent to the assertion that mankind, as their knowledge advances, will necessarily cease to believe in any kind of theology. This was M. Comte's opinion; but it is by no means implied in his fundamental theorem. All that is implied is that in an advanced state of human knowledge no other Ruler of the World will be acknowledged than one who rules by universal laws, and does not at all, or does not unless in very peculiar cases, produce events by special interpositions.'[2]

Constitutional government with a king who only suspends the law 'in very peculiar cases,' has not proved a very popular or permanent institution so far; and constitutional theism,

[1] 'System of Logic,' Vol. II., p. 528 (ninth ed.). [2] *Ibid.*

especially when served by ministers who are always trying to regain their lost ground, seems likely to share its fate. The most sparing employment of miracles stands logically on the same ground with their most unstinted profusion; and the historian who, on finding himself confronted by the phenomenon of a reported supernatural incident, refers it to 'a special interposition' of divine agency instead of to the laws of human credulity, is, so far, on the same plane with the savage who refers a thunderstorm to the more or less 'peculiar' temper of his god.

At the time when Mill wrote, such concessions to public opinion, however inconsistent or pusillanimous they may appear to modern rationalism, were probably indispensable to its earlier growth. Without them the introduction of his Logic as a class-book into Oxford and elsewhere might not have been permitted; and by seeming to take the sting out of positivism they prepared the way for its more complete assimilation by a younger generation of interpreters.

It remains to point out one more feature of the Logic; hitherto not much remarked, but of the highest value for the next stage of English thought. This is the immense importance given by Mill to the deductive method. Before his great work appeared, English ideas about the process by which scientific knowledge grows were in a state of the wildest confusion; nor can we be sure that they are extricated from it even now. National vanity came in to maintain and enhance the effect of theoretical ignorance. It was held, in defiance of history and reason alike, that the triumphs of modern science had been won by following the instructions of an English philosopher whose merits were taken at his own valuation. All discoveries were attributed to induction, and the whole organisation of induction was attributed to Francis Bacon. Conversely, syllogistic reasoning was made responsible for the dreams of antiquity and for the darkness of the Middle Ages. Even Coleridge thought he could not recommend Plato better than by reconciling him with Bacon. Bentham and the economists had certainly not reached their conclusions by induction, as vulgarly understood. But neither Benthamism nor political economy was very popular in the earlier years of the

century; and Macaulay held up the utilitarian philosophy to ridicule precisely on the ground of its deductive character, dwelling particularly on its resemblance to scholasticism.

Mill put an end to all this blind empiricism. He showed indeed, or attempted to show, that every general proposition must in the last resort be proved by induction, that is by particular experience. But he also showed that when a few universal truths, such as the axioms of geometry, the law of causation, and the laws of motion, have been obtained in this manner, it is possible, and even necessary, to reason down from generals to particulars, to take phenomena, as it were, in the rear, and to reach effects from their causes, when, owing to the extreme complexity of experience, the causes could never have been inferred from their effects. One may easily gather from his teaching, although he does not expressly mention it, that the ancient philosophers, and more particularly Aristotle, instead of being too deductive, were not deductive enough; their error did not consist in neglecting observation, but in trusting the evidence of their senses too far, in explaining the world by generalisations from their unanalysed experience. Mill certainly underrated the value of hypotheses; but Comte and Whewell, to whom he constantly refers, served, although in different ways and not without characteristic exaggerations, to redress the balance in favour of legitimate surmise.

Let us now see how this new exaltation of the deductive method came into connexion with the controversy between reason and religious belief. At first sight it might seem as if theology would gain by the revolution. For its professors, in building up their systems, have been distinctly partial to deduction; and the Tractarians in particular were adepts in the syllogistic logic. But in practice they worked by stringing together a series of assumptions, each of which represented a fractional probability of integral truth, while in the sum-total gained by multiplying all these chances together the disproportion between numerator and denominator was extreme. In contradistinction to such haphazard proceedings, Mill showed that the deductive method, as practised in physical science, involves three distinct operations, of which syllogism is only one. The first is pure induction, the generalisation of fundamental truths from experience. The second is a deduction by

pure reason of the particular consequences that must follow from these premisses, assuming them to be true. The third is verification, that is the comparison of these calculated results with the facts as revealed by direct observation, or as established by independent processes of reasoning. Only when the comparison shows an agreement as close as can in the circumstances be expected, is the theory held to be demonstrated. But, as practised by theologians, the deductive method breaks down at every stage. Their first principles are unwarranted by experience; their inferences are sophistical; and their verifications, when they offer any, are wholly irrelevant.

Such criticism, however, carries us no further than the rationalism of the eighteenth century, conclusive indeed as argument, but not supplying elements of popular conviction to the full extent desirable. Theology offers an explanation of the world which is most effectually destroyed by putting another in its place. Possibly the new system may itself be doomed to disappear; but meanwhile it affords a shelter under cover of which rationalism has free play; and sometimes on the removal of the provisional edifice the object of its attack is found to have disappeared. Thus from a merely negative point of view the philosophical speculations of the decades which succeeded the publication of Mill's 'Logic' have a value not necessarily belonging to them as interpretations of reality. Now, in these, as in all speculations deserving to be called philosophical, deduction plays a great part; and if Mill did not exactly suggest its employment to their authors, he at any rate inspired them with more confidence, and by educating a whole generation of critics, secured for them a more favourable hearing than might otherwise have been vouchsafed.

By a fortunate coincidence nearly at the time when the abstract theory of the deductive method was being presented to the most highly educated classes by a master-hand, two or three scientific deductions were so brilliantly verified as to arrest the attention even of the general public.

One day in the year 1839 a fragment of a large bone, 'like a marrow-bone in appearance,' was brought to the great naturalist, Richard Owen, by a seafaring man, who had obtained it from a native of New Zealand. It had been described by

the native as 'the bone of a great eagle;' but Owen assured the owner that it could not have belonged to any bird of flight. Further examination convinced him that it belonged to the skeleton of a gigantic wingless bird; and his knowledge of anatomy enabled him to reconstruct this bird, which no living man had ever seen, and which differed from all other known species of animals, living or extinct. A paper was printed containing a description of the hypothetical biped, copies of which were distributed over New Zealand, and search was made for its remains in all directions. After some years parcels of bones began to come in, and finally the whole skeleton was brought over to this country. It corresponded to the type constructed by Owen from the depths of his scientific consciousness. 'When the fragment of the shaft of a femur first arrived,' writes an eye-witness, 'the Professor took a piece of paper and drew the outline of what he conceived to be the complete bone. The fragment from which alone he deduced his conclusions was six inches in length and five and a half inches in its smallest circumference; both extremities had been broken off. When a perfect bone arrived and was laid on the paper, it fitted exactly the outline which he had drawn.'[1]

A few years later some slight perturbations in the calculated orbit of the planet Uranus led two astronomers, one English and the other French, to suspect the existence of a much more remote planet to whose gravitation the deflection was attributed. In complete independence, and even in ignorance of each other's researches, they set to work on the problem, and calculated the position of the unseen body with such accuracy that it was discovered in close proximity to the point in the zodiac to which a telescope was first turned in accordance with the directions supplied for the observer's guidance.

A little later still the discovery of gold-fields in Australia came to confirm a prediction of Murchison's. And although this prediction is now described as no more than a lucky guess, without any real scientific foundation, at the time it doubtless helped to increase the prestige of deductive science and the confidence of scientific thinkers in *a priori* methods.

One more consideration remains to add. Not only is the deductive method the great instrument of natural science in its

[1] 'Life of Richard Owen,' Vol. I., p. 151.

highest developments, and not only are its canons a perpetual criticism on the fallacious reasonings of theologians, but it is also by deduction that the truths of science are shown to be inconsistent with theological dogmas. For instance, the relation of determinism to the whole scheme of salvation cannot be understood without a chain of reasoning, too difficult apparently for some controversialists to master. They prefer to fall back on what are called 'experimental proofs' of religion, its effect, that is to say, on the character and the emotions of the believer. A favourite maxim of theirs is that it did not please God to save his people by dialectics. But, unfortunately for their position, some use of dialectics is needed before the more reasonable part of the world can be convinced that it has been saved, or indeed that it was ever lost.

It may seem to many that the relations of Mill and Comte to the science and theology of their age admit of a much more summary statement than is involved in the lengthy and somewhat complicated analysis which has now been brought to a close. They will say that the 'System of Logic' and the 'Positive Philosophy' embodied a materialistic reaction against the spiritualism of Coleridge and Cousin, and therefore by implication against the religion to which the sounder philosophy of those teachers, whatever may have been their personal heterodoxy, stood more nearly related than did the revived empiricism of Hume. Admitting that the logic of pure experience may not be incompatible with Christian orthodoxy, they will yet contend that such a logic slides more easily into its negation than a logic based on fundamental intuitions of the mind. For a knowledge of nature not wholly dependent on experience, a knowledge, that is, implying some internal principles that first make experience possible, seems to prove the supernatural origin of man, to establish a link between him and a spiritual power constituting the very life of things. And a philosophy which denies those intuitions must also tend to deny or to neglect the historical evidences afforded by Church or Scripture of a supernatural revelation supplying more detailed information about the unseen universe. Assimilating our souls to the consciousness of the lower animals, it will limit our existence, as theirs is limited, to a mere earthly and sensuous

life ; and, denying an immortal spirit to man, it will also deny that the world was created and is still governed by an eternal Spirit.

Such a philosophy, it may be urged, will naturally ally itself with the study of material objects, with the physical sciences whose very origin and purpose involves them in a constant appeal to the evidence of the senses. But the alliance will be as fatal to true science as it has been to true philosophy. For, from mathematics on, every branch of knowledge implies principles of spiritual origin in man, while also implying spiritual powers in nature.

There can be no doubt that Mill and Comte did present themselves under this aspect to many orthodox apologists when their works first appeared ; and many would look at them under no other aspect now. This view may be allowed to contain a certain amount of truth, but a truth which is neither philosophically the most important as regards the general evolution of thought, nor historically the most relevant to the present enquiry. To accept it would be, for one thing, to countenance that mischievous confusion between materialism and rationalism already signalised at the outset of the present work. And it would also be countenancing a serious misapprehension of the two thinkers under discussion, but more especially of Mill. Both were debarred by their theory of knowledge from giving any opinion about the nature of things in themselves, and therefore from adopting the theory of the eighteenth-century materialists, according to which consciousness results from the interplay of atoms composing extended substances ; and Mill in particular professed himself a Berkeleyan, regarding the conception of matter as a name for certain relations between our feelings. In other words, he accepted the very theory of human knowledge which Berkeley had originally put forward as a final refutation of materialism. And he was careful to insist on the perfect compatibility of his idealism with the existence of a personal God as well as with human immortality. Personally he had been brought up without any belief in either dogma, nor have we any reason to suppose that he ever changed his opinion on the subject, while leaving his philosophical adherents at liberty to draw an opposite conclusion from the same evidence.

Auguste Comte, however, stands in a different relation to theology; and there would be no objection to calling him a materialist in the popular sense, if the term could be strictly limited to a single connotation. Most people only care about speculative questions in so far as questions relating to life and conduct are affected by their decision; and in this respect their attitude should meet with the full approval of every positivist. Above all, the controversies between spiritualists and materialists only interest them as affecting their hopes and fears of a future life, or the nature of their duties in this life. Not caring for fine distinctions between body and matter, they simply want to know whether consciousness does or does not survive the visible and tangible nervous system with which it is at present associated; and the philosopher who answers them in the negative is what they call a materialist.

Now there is not the slightest doubt or ambiguity about Comte's answer. Individual immortality is a chimera. Phrenology is true; mind depends on brain and perishes with it. What Christianity teaches is false, and not only false, but mischievous, a diversion of the individual's thoughts from the interests of society to his own interests, his chances of salvation. Positivism promises him another sort of immortality, the survival of his memory in the thoughts and affections of those whom he has benefited and loved—a survival, by the way, not limited to man but shared by some of the higher auxiliary animals. More accurately, this subjective survival is already a fact, and has embodied itself in a true cult of the dead on the largest scale, especially in France, carried on concurrently with the official religion, and by some persons independently of it.

Our business, however, is neither with religion apart from belief, nor with imperfectly formed religious beliefs, but with those beliefs against which rationalistic criticism is directed. And as I have said, there can be no doubt whatever about the attitude of Comtism towards the Christian doctrine of a future life. And equally, I think, there can be no doubt that Mill's philosophy, so far as it bears on the question of the soul and its nature, tends towards the same conclusion. That which receives all its knowledge from without, that which receives all its impulses to action from antecedents of older date than its

own earthly existence, does not, to say the least of it, offer those guarantees of a supernatural origin on which philosophers of an opposite school have been wont to rest their hopes of its eternal duration.

Are we, then, to conclude that the popular view, or, to speak with more precision, the clerical journalist's view of Mill and Comte, is substantially the right one, that their teaching, in so far as it runs counter to theological belief, may be adequately summed up under the word materialism, and conveniently classed with the similar attacks of an Epicurus or a Lucretius, a La Mettrie or a D'Holbach, a Büchner or a Dühring—attacks which, from the clerical journalist's point of view, have been completely discredited by modern thought?

I think our answer must certainly be that the thing is not so, and that this would be neither a fair nor a full statement of the place occupied by Mill and Comte in the evolution of modern English rationalism. Either of these eminent thinkers might have admitted an element of *a priori* knowledge into his epistemology without altering the structure or relations of his system as a whole. There is no more difficulty in assuming that the mind possesses certain intuitions of reality than in assuming certain fundamental properties of matter as an ultimate and inexplicable fact. If theologians, grasping at this admission, went on to argue that by parity of reasoning moral intuitions must also be accepted as veracious, and that the existence of a God, in the Catholic sense, follows from these, positivists, and many others besides positivists, would meet them with a peremptory denial. They would say that the first principles of mathematics are guaranteed by the common consent of all reasonable beings, whereas there is no agreement about the alleged first principles of morals; theologians themselves, not to speak of mankind in general, being profoundly divided on the subject. They would point out that, assuming such agreement to exist, the very idea of first principles intuitively known involves their immutable and eternal character, excludes, that is to say, their having been created by any God as much as their having been created by any man. And they would add that, just as the moral law excludes a law-maker, so also does the moral motive exclude an avenging judge; for to introduce personal considerations into the choice between right and

wrong would imperil the disinterestedness which is essential to morality.

These are no mere hypothetical deductions; they had recently been verified on a great scale by the development of German philosophy on the lines of that very method the abandonment of which has been made responsible for the agnosticism of Comte and Mill. It had resulted in that Hegelian pantheism recently introduced to the notice of English readers by the Gospel-criticism of Strauss, and destined for many years afterwards to be regarded with even more dread than positivism by the orthodox Oxford apologists; for its artillery raked the whole line of their defences with a terribly destructive fire, and might even be exercised under cover of the Anglican flag.

Hegel and Comte had their points of difference; but in at least one respect their agreement was striking. Both appealed to the historical method as a support for essentially rationalistic conclusions, wresting it out of the hands of the reactionists, and showing that if it justified religious beliefs at a certain stage of reflexion, it pointed to their abandonment by the highest minds at the highest stage of intellectual and social evolution.

So much for the agreement between Hegel and Comte. Mill agreed with both in aiming at a readjustment of the relations between romanticism and the Enlightenment. At the same time the convergence of his Logic with Comte's Positive Philosophy had the further effect of rescuing the physical sciences from pietistic or hypocritical specialists, by organising their methods and results into a vast body of doctrine directly opposed, as it stood, to the current theology, and indirectly to all theology. They showed for the first time in history what scientific evidence really meant, and how it excluded belief in supernatural agencies. The limits of human knowledge as determined by both left no opening for a communication with any real or supposed Ruler of the world. Mill's law of causation virtually excluded the idea that the world had any cause outside itself. And when in after years English philosophy, growing restive at this limitation of its horizon, turned for help to Hegel, his theory of dialectical development was found to give an answer no more consonant with religious

belief than the negations of empiricism had been. Experience told us that this world was all we had. The profoundest logical interpretation of experience seemed to prove that no other world than this could, consistently with the nature of thought, be conceived; although the imagination of another world had necessarily entered into a preparatory stage of the long development by which the world-spirit has become conscious of itself.

END OF VOL. I

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